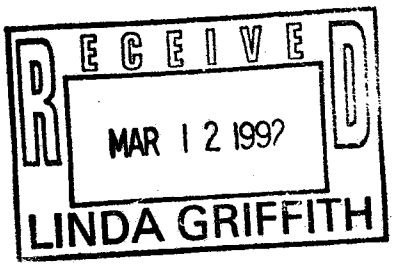

JOYRIDE

Written by

Rafael Yglesias

Based on the Novel by

Rafael Yglesias

SECOND DRAFT

March 5, 1992

© 1992
WARNER BROS. INC.
All Rights Reserved

WARNER BROS. INC.
4000 Warner Boulevard
Burbank, California 91522

FADE IN:

FIELD - DAY

A man and a boy seem to awaken. They lie where they fell, in a field of green corn stalks. The man leans over and picks up an infant seat in which there's an almost newborn baby. He takes the boy by the hand and they move on...

No sound but for a SLIGHT RINGING, of the kind you'd hear in your ears right after a tremendous explosion.

The man, MAX (40), seems to know where he's going. The boy, BYRON (9), clutches Max's hand. They move gracefully -- as if in a dream -- through the clear summer air. The sunlight dims out abruptly once or twice, like a light turning off and on. They move through the darkness or the light without reaction.

AIRLINE SEAT

Sitting intact in the field.

Max, carrying the newborn and Byron walk pass the intact seat in the green field. It's an incongruous image, straight out of a surrealist painter's head.

Sounds -- they are surreal, too: an ANIMAL CRY...? A SIREN...?

Shadows flit past Max, Byron and newborn running in the opposite direction.

MAX

His feet land on asphalt -- the tarmac of a runway. There are black skid marks and torn chunks of concrete...

Sound -- the RINGING CLEARS replaced by the chaos of rescue...

MAX'S POV

Behind are perhaps twenty survivors, following him out of the cornfield.

WIDE ANGLE

Max, Byron, and other survivors are surrounded by rescuers, helping, asking questions, etc.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Red Cross Volunteer #1, a young slim man, takes Byron's hand. Byron pulls away toward Max.

RED CROSS VOLUNTEER #1
We'll stay with your daddy.

MAX
I'm not his daddy.
(to Byron)
Go with him. You'll be okay.

BYRON
No! I wanna be with you!

MAX
(to volunteer)
Take him.
(shows newborn in infant seat)
I've got to find the mother.

TRACK WITH Max -- he walks toward the airport hangar where cots, stretchers, and soon, body bags will be placed. Everywhere there are rescuers and survivors.

Max approaches a WOMAN IN TORN CLOTHES, obviously a survivor.

MAX
Is this your baby?

The Woman in Torn Clothes turns. Max sees that she is in her sixties. She's in shock.

WOMAN IN TORN CLOTHES
I need my luggage. I can't stay in these clothes.

Max moves on. A PARAMEDIC comes up to him.

PARAMEDIC #1
You okay?

MAX
I've got to find the mother.

PARAMEDIC #1
Are you injured?

Max looks at himself. His body and clothes are pristine.

PARAMEDIC #1
Were you in the crash?

MAX

MAX
(a decision)
No.
(hurries on)
I found this baby. I've got to find the mother.

PARAMEDIC #1
(as he rushes off)
There's a woman over there looking for a baby.

Max follows the indication. He approaches a BLONDE MOTHER. As she turns to him, we see tears streaming down her face. Otherwise she seems calm. There are no tears in her dulled voice.

MAX
Is this your baby?

BLONDE MOTHER
(dulled, in shock)
My babies are okay. My sister and her sons...

She turns back and stares at one of the burning sections. No one could still be alive in there.

BLONDE MOTHER
I'm waiting for them.

Max moves on.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

CARLA, (28), very dark and New York Italian working class, is being carried on a stretcher. Her leg is broken. She's half-trying to get up, saying:

CARLA
My baby...

EMERGENCY DOCTOR (25), a dark haired man, checks her leg, her shoulder -- it's burned -- and then her eyes. Doctor talks to paramedic #2 (30) a plump woman. The Doctor is nervous, harried.

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
Leg's fractured. Get me an air cast. Second-degree burn. She's in shock. Could be internal --

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(rising)
I gotta go --

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
(stops her)
Whoa!

Paramedic #2 is offering an air cast to the Doctor.

MAX

appears beside Carla and offers her the infant he's carrying.

CARLA

For a moment, she's blank. But then, she's even more frantic.

CARLA
That's not my baby! My baby's still there!

Max moves on. We stay with the stretcher.

CARLA

CARLA
(struggling, hysterical)
I gotta get my baby!

EMERGENCY DOCTOR
(shouting at paramedic)
Give me morphine! Stat!
(yelling at Carla, holding her)
Settle down! I don't have time for this shit!

Paramedic #2 hands him a syringe. Carla fights.

CARLA
Just lemme go...

Paramedic restrains her. Emergency Doctor approaches with a syringe.

ON Carla's howl of protest...

CUT TO:

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

Max, still carrying the infant, approaches a woman wearing wire-rim glasses. She is seated on the open back door of a station wagon. She has her head buried in her hands. Max stands over her and holds the infant seat out.

MAX
Is this your baby?

WIRE-RIMMED GLASSES MOTHER

She looks up. For a beat, she doesn't move and then -- she's frantically happy, grabbing the infant seat away from Max and kissing the Newborn all over. She pays no attention to Max. That's okay with him.

Max moves on, toward the door to the airline terminal.

As Max reaches for the handle, he pauses at the sight of...

MAX'S POV

The glass reflection of what's on the tarmac:

An abstract in orange, really rather a beautiful color, a bonfire for a party or a lovely sunset.

MAX

turns and we turn with him to see the sight for the first time:

MAX'S POV - HOLOCAUST

A metal giant has been broken on the earth, cut into three torsos. Two are in flames; the third piece is eerily smoking. Rescuers -- firefighters and medical teams -- crawl like insects into and out of the huge smashed body. Machines pee foam and water onto the metal corpse.

We note an intact champagne bottle rolling toward an ambulance.

We see an engine lying by itself, charred like an over-done steak.

And for one long appalling second --

Bodies or body parts, unrecognizable and yet too recog-nizable as human corpses.

MAX

No reaction... He is expressionless.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Max enters a door as a television crew rushes past him going out. People watch from the windows. Max moves away from them toward the ticket counters.

COUNTERS

-- deserted. That includes the rental car counters.

MAX

At a water fountain. He splashes water all over his face. Beside it is a self-pay newspaper dispenser. Max peers at paper.

MAX
(to himself)
Canton, Ohio.
(thinks for a beat)
Home of the Pro-football Hall of Fame.

Max moves off toward the exit.

EXT. AIRPORT ENTRANCE - TAXI STAND - DAY

Max walks over toward three waiting taxis. THREE CABBIES are out of the cars, leaning against a chain link fence and watching the rescue efforts. One of the Cabbies is filming it with a Camcorder.

MAX
I need a cab.

Two of the cabbies look at him with surprise. The third one, using the Camcorder, keeps shooting, but he mumbles:

CAMCORDER CABBY
You gotta be kidding.

MAX
I'm not. I want to go to the nearest hotel.

One of the other two cabbies, a BALD MAN (45), turns to Max.

CONTINUED:

BALD CABBY
Right away?

Max nods. Bald Cabby looks at crash site with some regret.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERATON - DAY

The cab with Bald Cabby pulls up. Max steps out. He looks calm.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERATON ROOM - DAY

Ordinary room. It's empty. The door to the bathroom is open. We hear a SHOWER TURN OFF.

Max steps INTO our VIEW and plants himself in front of a large mirror on the wall. Max is in very good shape, a man who obviously exercises regularly and watches his diet.

MAX

studies his body intently and thoroughly, but dispassionately. He raises his hands and carefully touches himself, beginning with his pecs and then lowering his hands down the length of his torso. The touching is both practical -- he's checking -- and sensual -- he's enjoying the life in himself.

Finally he locks eyes with his image.

MAX
(quiet but excited)
You're not dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALL - DAY

Max, dressed again in his crash clothes (which still look just fine), walks up to a small Hertz car rental kiosk. (Customers stand outside as they are waited on.) Max pauses for a moment en route. He hears someone SINGING -- either live or recorded isn't clear -- just a single human voice, pure and thrilled. And then it's gone.

EXT. HERTZ COUNTER - DAY

A college-age WOMAN is on the phone. She is halfway through filling out a form for Max. Max is in front of her.

CAR RENTAL CLERK (WOMAN)
(to phone)
Jesus... I'm never flying again.
(to Max)
This is my boyfriend. A plane's crashed at the airport.

MAX
I'm in a hurry.

CAR RENTAL CLERK
(to phone)
A customer.

Max taps on the counter.

MAX
Fill out the form and call him back!

CAR RENTAL CLERK
(to phone)
Yeah, story of my life.

Clerk hangs up and looks at the form.

CAR RENTAL CLERK
You want insurance? It's three dollars for full coverage.

Max stares at her. He doesn't answer.

CAR RENTAL CLERK
(oblivious)
I thought you were in a big rush.

MAX
(a beat)
No insurance.

CAR RENTAL CLERK
That means you're responsible for any damage.

MAX
Yeah... I'm responsible.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR/HIGHWAY

Max is merging onto an empty highway. He glances over to the passenger seat. There's a map spread out on it.

MAX

looks calm as he leans forward and turns ON the RADIO. ROCK MUSIC comes on. Max smiles and merges into light traffic.

Max's car picks up speed. The speedometer climbs past sixty.

Max moves into the fast lane. He RAISES the RADIO'S VOLUME.

Speedometer: ... Seventy... Eighty... and still going...

NEW ANGLE

Max leans his head out the side window, far enough so that the rushing air washes over his face. He relishes its feel.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The town car is stopped on the shoulder. The driver's door is open. TRACK UP TO it (as if we're a traffic cop). There's no driver. TRACK AROUND the front of the car and ONTO the grass on the other side. We FIND three empty Hershey chocolate wrappers. We KEEP MOVING until we FIND...

MAX

stretched out, as if sunning himself. He looks at the ground beside him. Part of the grass has worn away and there's a dried, almost reddish patch of clay. Max lets a trail of saliva stream down casually and mix with the clay. It moistens into dark, fertile earth.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM CORRIDOR - CARLA - DAY

in a drugged sleep on a gurney. There's an air cast on the lower half of her leg. Her shoulder is bandaged. Around her there is chaos of activity, people being worked on, or wandering in shock.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEA (60), short and plump, wearing enormous tinted glasses, shakes Carla. Carla's eyes, very drugged-up, open woozily. Bea shows no fear of uneasiness about talking to Carla.

BEA
Hi, honey. My name is Bea. I'm a social worker and a family therapist... plus some other things. Has a doctor seen you?

CARLA
(touches her air cast)
It's broken.

BEA
That looks temporary. I was told you were traveling with a little boy. Your son?

CARLA
(rousing, getting upset)
I couldn't get him in the belt! It wouldn't work!

BEA
Okay... okay, I think you should know that your boy is missing. What was his seat number?

CARLA
Ask the stewardess about the belt -- it wouldn't get tight!

BEA
Okay, nobody's saying anything to contradict you, honey. Do you remember your seat number?

CARLA
(shakes her head no)
Is he dead?

BEA
I don't know. He isn't here and they tell me all the children are in this hospital. But that's not definite. There's a lot of confusion. Can I call someone for you? Your husband?

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(nods; passing out)
He's at work... He's Manny.

BEA
Manny. What's his number?

CARLA
555-4137... that's in New York.

BEA
Okay... go to sleep.

Carla passes out. Bea moves away, sadly. Another SOCIAL WORKER appears and indicates Carla.

SOCIAL WORKER
We've matched up all the kids who made it.

BEA
(nods, as if she knew)
Let's not say anything definite until her husband gets here.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - OFF-RAMP - DAY

A sign: WELCOME TO PITTSBURGH

MAX

He chuckles about the sign as he passes it.

CUT TO:

INT. LINCOLN STREET (PITTSBURGH) - DAY

A modest middle-class family house. ALISON (40), a woman with a beautiful face whose figure has seen much better days comes to the door as the echo of a DOORBELL FADES OUT. She opens it.

PORCH - ALLISON'S POV

No one's there. She steps out warily.

EXT. ALLISON'S LAWN - DAY

Alison sees the back of a man leaning against a maple. He looks contemplatively up the street.

ALISON
Hello...?

The man turns -- it's Max.

ALISON

Recognizing Max with pleasure.

ALISON
Max! Max Klein! What are --

Max walks right into her surprised arms and hugs her tight. She embraces him just as completely while her amazement lessens.

ALISON
What the hell are you doing here!
(studies him as they disengage)
You bastard, you don't look any different!

MAX
Nice try. I had a lot more hair. And there wasn't any gray.

ALISON
It makes you look even handsomer. I can't believe it! Max! It's been twenty years!
(her eyes fill)
Makes me want to cry.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PANCAKES (PITTSBURGH) - DAY

Max and Alison at a booth waiting for their order to arrive.

ALISON
We didn't even eat here as freshmen. It's ridiculous. Stay for dinner. You can meet my four kids --

MAX
Four!

CONTINUED:

ALISON
Yeah, we're crazy. I'm crazy. I've been made crazy.

MAX
I can't believe you never left Pittsburgh.

ALISON
Hey -- watch it, fella. We were just rated the most liveable city in America by some survey.

MAX
Yeah, some survey is right. The only reason it's liveable is because the steel industry died.

A WAITRESS arrives with a plate of pancakes for Max. The pancakes are embedded with pale slivers of strawberries.

MAX
These are strawberry pancakes?

WAITRESS
Yep.

MAX
I wanted -- do you have whole strawberries?

WAITRESS
I guess.

MAX
Bring me a bowl, please.

Waitress shrugs and goes.

ALISON
I don't remember you having a thing for strawberries.

MAX
How's Bill? Is he head of the Theater Department yet?

ALISON
No. He was passed over. Look, I'll make this quick. I can't stand going through the list item by item. My life is a disaster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
No, it isn't. Trust me. Your life isn't a disaster.

The bowl of strawberries arrives. Max takes one and eats it.

ALISON
(a sarcastic listing)
Yes it is. I'm fat. I haven't written a play in ten years. Timmy, my oldest, has a learning disability. Thanks to family therapy I've learned to love him for what he is, not my fantasy of what he should be. The middle two, James and Sarah, resent the extra attention Timmy got. So they fuck up in school to punish us. They're working that out in their support group for Siblings Of The Learning Disabled. And my youngest, my beautiful baby Ellen, who was going to be the great ballerina? She destroyed her ankle playing basketball with her brothers. As for Bill -- he's screwing a student.
(gives up, laughing)
It's pathetic. Not even tragic.

Max offers a strawberry.

MAX
Have a strawberry.

ALISON
(laughing helplessly)
What good's that gonna do?

MAX
Forbidden fruit always does good.

ALISON

takes the strawberry and eats it suggestively. She's asking...

MAX

Eats another strawberry and holds her look.

MAX
I didn't come for that.

ALISON
Figures. You were always faithful.

MAX
And you?

ALISON
Who would have me...
(abrupt)
Wait a second. Aren't you allergic to strawberries? Didn't you almost die when you were little from eating a strawberry?

Max leans back, indicates his intact body, and smiles expansively.

MAX
Oh, I'm past all that. See...?
No reaction. No reaction at all.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A small private room. Carla lies in a drugged sleep in a bed. There's a permanent cast on her leg and a new bandage on her shoulder. Outside the one window we see it's night.

MANNY (30), Carla's husband, sits by the bed in a chair, watching Carla. He's half-Filipino, half-Italian and all working class. He's dark, handsome and macho. Right now, he's worried.

CARLA

Her eyes open. They are blurred, unfocused. When they recognize Manny a kind of fear comes into them.

CARLA
Manny...?

Manny moves out of the chair and sits on the bed. He takes her hand. She watches him as if he's capable of anything, even hurting her. Manny puts his head besides hers.

CONTINUED:

MANNY
I'm here, babe. I been here for an hour. A doctor told me you're okay.

CARLA
Did they say anything...?

She can't finish. Manny maneuvers so that he is almost hugging her. He kisses her cheek, her eyes, and whispers into her ear. We don't hear, but we know the terrible news that he's giving her.

CARLA

CARLA
No...

Shuts her eyes in pain. After a beat, she opens them. They're wild from the hurt. There's no escape from her loss.

Carla pushes Manny off. He moves away hopelessly.

CARLA
Let's get outta here.

Tears are running from her eyes, but she isn't sobbing. She sits up.

CARLA
I wanna go home!

Manny slumps into the chair, puts his head in his hands.

CARLA
What are you doing! Get up! Get me out of here! I want to go home!

Manny doesn't move. Carla tries to move, but she can't shift the heavy cast, she's too weak.

CARLA
God damn it! Manny! Get me out of here! I'm gonna go crazy here!

She breaks down into hopeless sobs.

A NURSE looks in. She's carrying a pill and a cup of water.

CONTINUED:

NURSE
(to Manny)
She want a sedative?

Manny signals to the Nurse to come in with the pills.

CARLA
(shouts through her sobs)
I want my baby!

She reaches for what's nearby, a plastic cup, and throws it at the Nurse. It falls far short.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERATON HALLWAY (PITTSBURGH) - DAY

AGENT PARSONS (45), a clean-cut man and AGENT SMITH (35), a very tall and thin African-American. They look at a photocopy of someone. It's a blurred picture of Max. They knock on a room door loudly. After a pause, they knock again, even louder.

Max opens the door. He's in underpants and looks disheveled from sleep.

AGENT SMITH
It's him.

Both men show Max their FBI I.D.

AGENT PARSONS
Good morning, sir. I'm Agent Parsons and this is Agent Smith of the F.B.I. You're registered as Mr. Max Klein of 505 West End Avenue in Manhattan. Is that correct?

MAX
You've got me.

Max steps back into his room and sags onto the bed. THROUGH the window we can see it's morning. There are the remains of an elaborate room service meal for two, including two bottles of champagne.

AGENT PARSONS
Were you on a flight to -- ?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Yes. I was.

AGENT SMITH
You took a hike from the scene? Just upped and left?

MAX
What time is it?

AGENT SMITH
Ten o'clock Thursday morning. You've been missing for almost a day.

MAX
(puzzled)
Missing...?

AGENT SMITH
Mr. Klein, what are you doing here? You walked from the crash, rented a car, drove to Pittsburgh ... Why?

MAX
They didn't need me anymore.

AGENT PARSONS
Need you for what?

MAX
(curious)
Am I under arrest?

AGENT PARSONS
You haven't done anything.

MAX
(smiles)
That's what you think.

CUT TO:

INT. CARLA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CARLA - DAY

It's morning. She stares into space, hopeless and desolate.

BEA (O.S.)
(to Manny)
Hi, I'm Bea. I talked to your wife yesterday. I heard about your son. I'm very sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANNY (O.S.)
Thank you.

Bea appears next to Carla, sitting on the bed.

BEA
I heard you refused to take any more tranquilizers. I told them to leave you alone. You're right. Throwing blankets on a fire may put it out, but if you cover feelings... they burn hotter inside.

CARLA
(dead voice)
Who are you?

BEA
You mean, why am I bothering you? I'm a thanatologist. That's a very long word which means I try to help people who have lost someone. Lost someone. Isn't that a funny way to talk? I mean -- when someone they love has died.

CARLA
That's very nice of you.

BEA
I do it for myself. My daughter Julie died in a car accident. She was sixteen. She went to the movies with friends and I never saw her again. Every time I cried, they gave me a sedative. Every time I talked, they told me to forget. It took me three years to stop using the pills. When I quit them, my pain was still there... as if she'd died the day before. So you scream bloody murder. Get it out.

CARLA

No reaction. She isn't crying or raging. She's dead. She takes a pillow and holds it in front of her.

CONTINUED:

BEA
What happened in the crash? Was he in your lap?

Carla is agitated. She tightens her grip on the pillow.

MANNY
This ain't helping.

BEA
She has to talk about it...

CLOSEUP - CARLA

she clutches the pillow as she begins to re-live...

FLASHBACK - INT. TRANSCON PLANE - DAY

CARLA AND BUBBLE

Snuggling in the seat as the plane nears the ground. Carla has a tight hold on Bubble. Other passengers are bent forward in crash positions.

END OF FLASHBACK.

INT. HOSPITAL - CARLA - DAY

Reacting to the memory, she's sobbing. Manny pulls at Bea.

MANNY
You have to go --

BEA
Talk about it, honey...

MANNY
She don't want to talk about a fucking thing!

CARLA
(wild, desperate)
I don't remember! I don't remember anything!

CUT TO:

INT. PITTSBURGH SHERATON LOBBY - DAY

Max, Agent Parsons, and Agent Smith come out of an elevator. Max has showered and shaved, so some time has gone by. Agent Parsons nods yes to a young woman who approaches. She is --

CINDY DICKENS (25), Transcon Public Relations. She's pretty, but dressed in business armor, both her clothes and manner.

CINDY
Mr. Klein? I'm Cindy Dickens of Transcontinental Air. I'm here to help get you home.

MAX
That's nice. No one's taken me home since first grade.

CINDY
I've got tickets on Amtrak to get you back to New York. Your train leaves in an hour.

MAX
I want to fly.

CINDY
Excuse me...?

MAX
You'll fly me back to New York free, right?

CINDY
Of course...
(confused)
When I told your wife the good news about you she said that even before the... uh, unpleasant...

MAX
The crash.

CINDY
Right. Even before that you were scared to fly.

MAX
I would love to fly home on your airline. But I've got a request.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY
(wary)
Sir...?

MAX
I want to go first class.

CINDY
(relieved)
With our compliments, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSCON COUNTER (PITTSBURGH AIRPORT) - NIGHT

Max approaches a counter with a ticket. Cindy Dickens is in b.g., hustling over to a bank of phones away from Max. We see that it's night outside.

CLOSEUP MAX'S HAND

as he slaps the ticket down.

FLASHBACK- INT. TRANSCON COUNTER (NEWARK AIRPORT) - CLOSE ON MAX'S HAND - DAY

as he slaps a different ticket down.

PULL OUT -- Beside Max is JEFF GORDON (35-40), his business partner.

Max is in the same clothes he wears in the present. Jeff is also dressed casually and carries a portfolio for architectural drawings. In contrast to how we've seen him so far, Max is very nervous. TRANSCON CLERK ONE look up at him. Max points to the flight boards.

MAX
(to Clerk)
What's the equipment on our flight? That says 727. But this is supposed to be widebody service.

JEFF
If you don't relax, they'll give you wide berth service.

TRANSCON CLERK
No, sir, that's the flight number. I'll check.

The clerk clacks keys on her terminal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(alarmed)
It's supposed to be a 747.

JEFF
We'll go to Gate 8 and see for ourselves.

TRANSCON CLERK
There has been a change. It's not a wide-body --

JEFF
Here we go...

MAX
I called three times. They told me, they promised it was going to be a 747.

TRANSCON CLERK
There was an equipment change. Sometimes we have trouble --
(stumbles)
you know, not trouble, --

MAX
When's your next flight on a 747? Or even an L-1011?

JEFF
You're kidding. We can't keep Nutty Nick waiting!
(intense whisper to Max)
You'll fuck up the biggest opportunity of our lives!

TRANSCON CLERK
One-thirty. There's another at five oh five.

MAX
We'll take one-thirty --

Max moves to hand the tickets to the Clerk to be changed. Jeff intercepts the tickets and marches away from the counter toward the gates.

Max follows Jeff and stops him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEFF
You're not an idiot and you're not neurotic -- I take that back, you <u>are</u> neurotic...

MAX
I've learned to control it. By being logical I can control the fear. I've learned all I could about airplanes so I can fly under certain conditions --

JEFF
I understand. You're an obsessive compulsive control freak.

MAX
I can't after a sudden equipment change! Don't make me!

JEFF
(really angry)
You have to! Listen to me! We're drowning! Either get on that plane or kiss our business goodbye!

Max is thoughtful, hesitant. Jeff grins meanly:

JEFF
Besides, what are you worrying for? Your life isn't so great.

INT. TRANSCON TERMINAL COUNTER (PITTSBURGH) - MAX - NIGHT

coming out of the memory. He focuses on the TRANSCON CLERK in the present.

MAX
I want a window seat, please.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSCON 722 - COCKPIT - CLOSEUP INSTRUMENT PANEL - NIGHT

Lights flashing.

PULL OUT -- Pilot and Co-Pilot going through pre-flight check. The Co-Pilot becomes uneasy -- he feels there's someone looking at him. He turns:

MAX

He stares back innocent, curious.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT steps between Max and his view of the cockpit.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Sir? May I see your boarding pass?

INT. TRANSCON 727 - MAX'S SEAT - NIGHT

The first two seats in First Class. Max looks out the window at the runway. A Psychologist, BILL PERLMAN (40), a big friendly man, rushes in and sits down next to Max. He is out of breath. We're on the runway. Perlman chats easily, but he keeps an observant eye on Max. Max is happy, at ease.

PERLMAN
Just made it. I'm Bill Perlman. Flying home, right?

Max nods.

PERLMAN
Glad to be going home, I bet.

Max peers at him with the trace of a smile.

MAX
You're a shrink.

PERLMAN
(unfazed)
That's right. I specialize in the treatment of Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome. I wrote a book about it and several airlines hired me --

The jet taxis.

PERLMAN
-- we're taxiing now -- as a consultant to work with crash survivors. Naturally, one of my perks is free tickets --

The ENGINES REV LOUDLY. Perlman continues to interrupt himself and narrate the 727's actions.

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
-- that's the captain getting the engines up to speed -- but I travel so much for work that my idea of a vacation -- we're turning to be in position for takeoff -- is to stay put.

MAX
I'm not scared. But I would like another drink when we're airborne.
(smiles, elbows Perlman)
I should say, if we're airborne.

An elderly woman on the other aisle looks concerned at this joke.

PERLMAN
(tense)
We're beginning takeoff.

MAX
(leans across Perlman)
Look at us go!

PERLMAN
(tight, as they lift up)
I was told you're terrified of flying.

MAX
I was.
(cheering plane on)
Go, baby, go!

PERLMAN
(rigid in seat)
What you did was remarkable. They say you saved more than twenty people --

The jet banks sharply, turning while it climbs. Perlman grips the seat handles.

MAX
(happy)
This is the most dangerous time. Every bolt is stressed. The air is crowded with deadly obstacles ... each one as reckless and blind as we are.

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
(very nervous)
We're safe.

The elderly woman looks more upset.

MAX
The hydraulics were blown out. We should have fallen out of the sky.

Max spreads his arms out, preparing to mime the flying actions.

MAX
But that pilot improvised brilliantly. Half of us died. That's the count, right?
(as a sweating Perlman nods)
The captain didn't make it, did he?
(as Perlman, swallowing hard, nods)
No, he was crushed when he flipped over. But he saved ninety lives by doing this...

Max rocks his arms up and down, flying a wounded plane. The elderly woman seems ready to freak. Perlman notices her.

PERLMAN
Okay, okay. That's enough.

Max drops his arms. He leans toward Perlman.

MAX
No one is safe, Doctor Perlman.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CLOSE UP ON DEBBY - NIGHT

Looking into a mirror.

DEBBY (35-40), Max's wife, is lithe, very beautiful, an ex-ballerina. She has the fragile uncertainty of someone preparing for the first date, looking at her own image as if considering whether it needs a change.

Debby puts on lipstick and immediately wipes it off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
(to her image)
What am I doing?

O.S. we hear a HUBBUB. Debby turns quickly and opens the bathroom door. We FOLLOW her out INTO...

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Big, sweeping view of the Hudson river. Very very white and spare; furniture all modern, but tasteful, not parody and not entirely hi-tech. The room is full of people. They are:

JONAH (10), Max's son, a tall thin child with a shy, intelligent manner. At once gentle and clever.

BRILLSTEIN (40), a small-time wrongful death lawyer. Doesn't matter whether he's tall or thin, fat or skinny. What matters is, he's dressed just this side of tacky and his manner is falsely solemn. He's hyper: nervous even when at rest.

GAIL (68), Max's mother, an elegant, sophisticated middle-class woman, and her unmarried daughter SARAH (38), somewhat overweight, inelegant, and unhappy. Debby's parents are there and several friends, but only to fill out the scene.

The crowd parts as Debby appears and we FIND Max.

Debby approaches Max with her arms unfolding toward him. (NOTE: Remember, she is a dancer and moves with studied grace.) Jonah hangs near his father, but shyly.

DEBBY AND MAX

as they embrace.

DEBBY
(passionate whisper)
Why didn't you call?

MAX
Didn't occur to me.

Debby is puzzled, to say the least. Max opens his arms to Jonah.

MAX
Come here...

CONTINUED:

Max hugs Jonah. He whispers to his son.

MAX
Were you scared?

JONAH
I was worried.

Brillstein appears in Max's vision, despite the embrace going on.

BRILLSTEIN
Excuse me, I'm Steven Brillstein.

DEBBY
Nan asked if he could wait here for you... He's a lawyer.

BRILLSTEIN
I'm sorry to intrude. Mrs. Gordon is frustrated. The airline hasn't made a definite statement --

MAX
Jeff's dead.

Max is matter of fact. His news is a bombshell. Debby is scared. Jonah is shocked. Gail, Max's mother, cries out. His sister, Sarah, helps their mother to the couch while complaining:

SARAH
Jesus, Max!

PERLMAN
Max isn't himself right now.

MAX
How do you know? We just met.
(in answer to Debby's look)
A therapist who works for the airlines.

PERLMAN
I'm here for you, Max.

BRILLSTEIN
(to Perlman)
If the airline pays your bills then it's a conflict of interest. I know, I'm terrible. But I have to warn Mr. Klein that anything he says --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
Is in confidence. That's my agreement with the airlines. Relax.

BRILLSTEIN
You help make them look more sympathetic to a jury, am I right? I know, I'm terrible.

MAX
You're Debby's lawyer?

BRILLSTEIN
Just a friendly advisor until they hire an aviation specialist. I'm sorry to bother you, but are you certain about Mr. Gordon?

MAX
He's dead. Completely dead.

Gail covers her face and groans. Sarah looks daggers.

MAX
Sorry. I didn't know you felt that close to Jeff, Mom.

GAIL
I've known him for twenty years!

MAX
You knew him because he was my partner.

JONAH
How do you know he's dead?

Max separates from Debby who's upset now, rather than excited as she was at the start of the scene. Max walks to Jonah.

MAX AND JONAH

In a huddle. Max talks to his son in an intimate whisper.

MAX
I forgot, Jonah, that you and Sam are best buddies. Sammy'll be okay. We'll look after him.

Brillstein sticks his head into Max and Jonah's huddle.

CONTINUED:

BRILLSTEIN
Can we speak privately?

Perlman sticks his head into the huddle.

PERLMAN
This is inappropriate.

Max stands up.

MAX
Out! All of you!

PERLMAN
We should talk.

Max punches Perlman.

DEBBY
(aghast)
Max, are you crazy!

MAX
I didn't hit him very hard.

Max is right. Besides, Perlman is big. He remains standing. The room is stunned. Perlman has no visible reaction. He looks thoughtful.

PERLMAN
I can't help you.

Perlman leaves. The others hurry up and go. Max stares after them. Debby snuggles up to him. Brillstein moves away from Max -- very far away -- and says:

BRILLSTEIN
In fairness to Mrs. Gordon, I should hear the details.

MAX
I'll tell her.
(to Jonah)
Why don't you come with me? Sammy'll be glad to see you.

DEBBY
You're going? You just got here!

MAX
I'm going to be home for a long time. Jeff isn't.

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
You could call her.

MAX
Yeah, or I could fax it to her.

DEBBY
You almost died. Right after something like that you should be with your family.

MAX
Don't scold me. Don't make me apologize for being good just because it isn't being good to you.

DEBBY
Good to me! You didn't tell me you were alive for twenty-four hours!

BRILLSTEIN
I'll tell Mrs. Gordon provided I know what I'm talking about.

MAX
(to Debby)
I owe it to Nan to tell her.

DEBBY
Go to her.

Debby exits. Jonah steps in her direction; then looks to Max.

MAX
Come with me.

Jonah's too worried. He shakes his head no and follows Debby.

MAX AND BRILLSTEIN

Everyone else has left. Brillstein cowers by the door.

BRILLSTEIN
Want a lift?

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. - WEST SIDE HIGHWAY EXTENSION/BRILLSTEIN'S CAR - NIGHT

Brillstein's car, a dusty and dented blue Volvo station wagon, is going a million miles an hour on the lower Manhattan stretch of a roadway beside the Hudson River. Brillstein weaves in and out of traffic at a mad, reckless pace. Max, in the death seat, is magnificently calm. As they SCREECH around some obstacle...

MAX
You drove a cab to put yourself through college.

BRILLSTEIN
(he whistles, then:)
Good guess. For two years. Destroyed my kidneys.
(doesn't pause)
Mrs. Gordon's gonna take it hard.

MAX
She must suspect.

BRILLSTEIN
Don't think so.

MAX
That why she called you?

BRILLSTEIN
Her father called my father. I said I'd help out until they picked an aviation lawyer.

MAX
There are aviation lawyers?

Brillstein makes another hair-raising move to pass a slower car.

BRILLSTEIN
Oh sure. With a plane crash you can get name brand lawyers. My practice is mostly automobile accidents...

Brillstein drives over a pothole so fast that the car bounces violently. Max bumps his head on the ceiling.

BRILLSTEIN
... And some medical malpractice. An airplane crash is the golden goose of wrongful death.

CONTINUED:

MAX
Wrongful death...

BRILLSTEIN
From what you said, you saw Mr. Gordon's body.

MAX
(nods)
He drove a cab, too. Right after college... Before we started our business.

Brillstein comes to a lurching stop at one of the rare lights.

BRILLSTEIN
Let me give you a piece of advice. When you talk to your lawyer, you should emphasize that you saw your partner's dead body. And think hard about what else you saw. Doesn't matter what you've said to anyone so far. In accidents, there's a delayed reaction. Memories of what happened come back gradually. It's terrible to have to talk about, but is <u>is</u> important to remember if you saw Mr. Gordon actually being killed. Another thing to remember -- if Mr. Gordon didn't die instantly, if he was in pain --

MAX
(laughs)
You're telling me how to lie so I can get more money.

The light changes. Brillstein speeds off.

BRILLSTEIN
To be honest, I wasn't thinking about you. I was thinking about Mrs. Gordon. She doesn't come from a rich family and now she's a widow with two children --

Max screams!

Brillstein, shocked, jerks the wheel. They go into a SKID, heading right at the water...

MAX

is calm as his side of the car heads for the Hudson.

Brillstein's Volvo comes out of the skid and brakes to stop against a chain link fence at the river's edge. No harm is done. Traffic continues to move beside them.

BRILLSTEIN
What's wrong!

MAX
I don't want to tell any lies.

BRILLSTEIN
Okay. Next time just say, 'no.'

They stare at each other for a beat; then they break up.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

Max and Brillstein enter and march to the elevator. Once there, Brillstein turns to Max and speaks with import:

BRILLSTEIN
Don't scream, okay? But bear in mind -- you're sitting pretty, you get the partnership insurance. I think you owe Mrs. Gordon anything that would improve her settlement.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Max and Brillstein going up in an elevator. Max is deciding...

MAX
I want you to represent me and Nan.

BRILLSTEIN
I can't recommend me. I'd love to do it. Frankly, airplane crashes are like taking candy from <u>ninos</u>. But you can get the whole <u>magilla</u>. Harvard law, Armani suit... Sharks in wool clothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
That's exactly what I don't want. I want someone I can see through.

BRILLSTEIN
Thanks. Appreciate the compliment.

The elevator doors open. Brillstein blocks the way with an arm.

BRILLSTEIN
One thing. I had all night to look through Mr. Gordon's papers. He cashed in the tickets you ordered on Amex, got a better price, rebought them for cash and pocketed the difference.

MAX
So Jeff cheated me out of couple hundred bucks.

BRILLSTEIN
So he cheated his wife out of the automatic American Express insurance. That's another reason why your memory is so important.

MAX
He's not really dead, is he?

Max pushes past Brillstein.

INT. JEFF'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

NAN (38), a tall blonde, who looks frantic, comes toward Max. In b.g. at the apartment door are her children, Sam (10), a nerdy kid, and Jake (5). Max opens his arms as Nan runs into them.

MAX AND NAN

MAX
I'm sorry...

Nan just hugs him tight: no words or tears.

MAX
Breathe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAN
I knew it. I just knew it right away. Isn't that crazy?

MAX
He loved you.

NAN
God, we were stupid.

MAX
What?

NAN
We lived like jerks. Always nagging. We wasted it.

Now Nan cracks. She sobs and sinks toward the floor. Max tries to support her, but they both slide down in an embrace.

MAX
No. He loved you. You made him happy.

MAX'S POV

Sam and little Jake resisting as their grandparents try to pull them inside the apartment.

MAX (O.S.)
He loved you, Nan. You made him happy.

Nan interrupts her sobbing enough to say:

NAN
Oh shut up, Max.

CUT TO:

INT. JONAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Same night. Max still in his crash clothes. The room is a typical New York middle-class kid's room: Apple computer, Nintendo, baseball cards, lots of books and tons of Legos. The lights are out. Max comes in and, as he leans over to kiss the presumably-sleeping Jonah...

JONAH
I'm awake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max jumps back, excessively startled. Max makes no noise of surprise -- just the movement. Then Max leans over and kisses his son's brow.

JONAH
You saw Jeff's... body?

MAX
He didn't feel anything.

JONAH
How do you know that!

MAX
(beat)
I don't want to tell you.

Max kisses him again and moves off toward the door.

JONAH
I can't sleep.

MAX
Yes you can.

INT. MAX'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dark. Max enters from leaving Jonah's bedroom, exhausted.

Debby, dressed in a long nightshirt, looking like a beautiful 19th century ghost, hurries from their bedroom across into Max's arms. They whisper throughout because of Jonah lying awake.

DEBBY
I'm scared.

MAX
I don't have patience for that anymore.

Debby moves out of his arms, peering at him in the dark.

DEBBY
Patience...?

MAX
I can't make it all okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
What the hell are you talking about? Do you know what I went through? And Jonah? You didn't call. I thought you were dead.

MAX
I thought I was dead, too.
(takes a deep breath)
I'm hungry. Want something?

Max exits. He turns on the kitchen light and we hear POTS and PANS BANGING, while Debby looks on, puzzled and worried.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAX'S BUILDING - DAY

A day camp bus, filled with kids, is at the corner. The kids are at the windows, pointing to...

A mob of press waiting outside the lobby of Max's building. With them is Byron and his father, PETER (44), who has the look of old money, although he is a sensitive modern version of fatherhood.

Max and Jonah appear. They are surrounded by the press and Byron. Max looks pleased by Byron, wary of the press.

BYRON
Mister Klein! It's me! We live in the same city! Isn't that cool?

MAX
Hey... You look great. This is my son, Jonah.

BYRON
Hi, I'm Byron.

JONAH

is worried by the crowd. He whispers to Max.

JONAH
I want to get on the bus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
(loud, clearing a way)
Come on, people. My son's going to day camp. Make way.

REPORTER #1
Is it true you saved this boy's life?

That's only one of many questions they shout. Max ignores the reporters while he maneuvers Jonah to the bus. Max tries to kiss Jonah, but Jonah ducks it, and the bus takes off, leaving Max to the mercy of the crowd.

PETER
I'm Peter Hummel, Byron's father. I want to thank you.

MAX
You have a brave son.

BYRON
I made Dad bring me! I can't sleep! I want to be with you!

REPORTER #1
Why do you want to be with him, son?

BYRON
I feel safe with him.

REPORTER #1
A lot of people are safe because of you, Mister Klein. They're calling you the Good Samaritan.

MAX
I didn't save anyone. The pilot saved us.

BYRON
You saved me! I was upside down and stuck. You got me out. And a baby, too!
(to reporters)
He found a way out for a lotta people. We would've been fried!

The press eats Byron up. Max backs away OUT OF FRAME: he feels claustrophobic. The press is between him and the lobby.

CONTINUED:

REPORTER #1
He saved a baby?

BYRON
Yeah! Pulled it outta the fire and gave it to the mother.

REPORTER #1
What about the baby, mister...?

He's stopped by something.

REPORTER'S POV

Max is running away, already more than a block off.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE DRIVE - DAY

Max comes running AT us, almost frantic. He stops. And stares.

MAX'S POV

The West Side of New York City. The Hudson looks magnificent.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

Max is at its empty western edge. He continues to be fascinated by the Hudson River. The elevated West Side Highway blocks the way. There are three lanes going north, a narrow concrete divider, and then another cramped three lanes going south.

Near Max is a DRUG ADDICT, Hispanic, dressed poorly, very skinny, in a T-shirt cutaway at the belly. Max is in jeans, sneakers and a bright yellow Polo shirt. No one else is around.

DRUG ADDICT
Hey, man, you got two dollars and ninety-nine cents? I wanna get me McD.L.T., fries, and a diet-Coke.

Max pats his pants. He left the apartment without his wallet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
I don't have anything on me.

DRUG ADDICT
Fuck that, man! That's bullshit.

Max ignores the cursing. He is focused on the river. He stands on the barrier that separates him from the northern traffic.

DRUG ADDICT
(laughing hysterically)
What you doing! Looking for a cab!

MAX'S POV

of the treacherous traffic. The cars whiz right IN FRONT of us.

MAX

takes off across the northbound lanes. Cars don't brake. Max barely makes it to the concrete divider. He stands on top of it, wobbling precariously, sandwiched between the whizzing cars. There's another three lanes of southbound traffic to cross to reach a small strip of grass at the Hudson's edge.

A cigarette is tossed at Max from a passing van, hitting him.

VAN DRIVER
Get off there, asshole!

There's a brief gap in the southbound traffic. Max takes off...

A Mercedes bears down on him in the far lane. Max can't make it.

Max leaps...

And lands on the grass, rolling and rolling until he is almost at the water's edge.

CLOSEUP - MAX

sits up, happy, and looks at the river. After a beat...

DRUG ADDICT (O.S.)
There's a tunnel, you dumb fuck!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max gets up. The Drug Addict confronts him. They are alone on this narrow strip of land while cars whiz past. In b.g. we see a tunnel exit.

DRUG ADDICT
Gimme your money, man.

Drug Addict takes out a switchblade and releases its blade.

MAX
(sad)
I told you. I got nothing.
Don't even have my keys.

Drug Addict is frantic, nervous. He flicks the blade at Max.

DRUG ADDICT
Don't fuck with me! I'll cut you!

Max calmly looks right into the Addict's eyes. Max seems to draw the mugger toward him.

MAX
(no challenge, a fact)
Go ahead. I don't have anything.

Drug Addict lunges at Max!

CLOSEUP - KNIFE

it sinks into the left side of Max's chest.

MAX AND ADDICT

They both look at the disappeared blade. Max, disgusted, pushes the Addict in the chest. The Addict falls on his ass. The knife is still in Max. But there's no blood. Puzzled, Max raises his arm and we see that the knife didn't go into him, it went into the space between his chest and his arm. It has torn his Polo shirt in the armpit and hangs there, harmless.

Drug Addict, panicked, gets up and runs away.

The knife falls to the grass. Max laughs. He raises his arms to the West Side skyline and calls to the world:

CONTINUED:

MAX
You can't do it! You want to kill me -- but you can't!

CUT TO:

EXT. UPPER BROADWAY - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

A teeming summer day. The streets are full of people of all colors and of all gradations of beauty. It's a mess, it's sexy, it's scary and it's beautiful.

MAX

He walks in great fast strides among the crowds. He isn't looking at the people, though. He's looking at the buildings. His Polo shirt, torn from the switchblade, is soaked through.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HELL'S KITCHEN - DAY

A bad, dangerous street. Ominous-looking kids hang on the stoops and they look surprised at something.

MAX

He's the something. Striding down the block, he pauses at a dilapidated brownstone. He stares at the way one of the windows is fit.

ANGLE ON STREET

All the ominous types watch him, sort of paralyzed by his boldness. After a beat, Max walks on, invulnerable, right past them.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S OFFICE - CLOSEUP DOOR - DAY

A simple plaque reads: "Klein & Gordon Architects"

Max's hand comes INTO FRAME, touches the plaque once with the tip of his finger as if he were pressing a button. A beat, then:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max pushes the door open with a violent bang and enters. Max is in the drenched, torn Polo shirt. The office is modest, half of a loft floor. The desks are messy, models askew on a shelf, blueprints left on top of files.

GLADYS (55), the bookkeeper, a plump kindly matron, wheels at the noise and cries out:

GLADYS
Max!
(calls out as she approaches him)
He's here!

From adjoining offices the whole staff appears. They are BETTY (23), a secretary; WARREN (45), a rather sad-looking draftsman; and SCOTT (28), a young draftsman with a long pony tail.

Someone claps and then the others come in while Gladys behaves like she's his maiden aunt. She hugs Max.

GLADYS
My God, Max, what a nightmare.

MAX
Yes.

Max politely moves her off him. His shirt is sticking to him and, because of the air-conditioning, is chilling. He peels it off. His bare-chestedness is somehow inappropriate.

GLADYS
I'll get you a towel.

Max nods and walks into his and Jeff's office.

INT. MAX'S AND JEFF'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MAX'S POV - DAY

The partner's drawing tables, side by side, looking out onto a busy Chelsea Street and the ugly FIT buildings.

MAX

goes to his desk and swivels, glancing at Jeff's empty chair.

MAX
Come in, everybody.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The staff was nearby anyway. They enter. Gladys bustles in and hands Max paper towels.

GLADYS
That's all we've got.

Max wipes the sweat off with the paper towels. From the way they watch we know his relaxed physical behavior isn't typical.

GLADYS
Everyone's called.

WARREN
Practically every client.

BETTY
We're so proud of what you did.

MAX
Of what I did?

GLADYS
The children.

BETTY
You were so brave.

MAX
Thank you. I know this is as much of a shock for you as it is for Jeff's family. He spent as much time here --
(catches himself)
Actually, he didn't. Anyway, I know you're all feeling upset, but I want to give you as much notice as possible. We have -- what do you think, Warren -- about three months work?

WARREN
I guess...

MAX
I don't want to keep the firm going after that work. You'll all be on salary through October but you should start looking for jobs right away. I'll help out, think up people to call, make recommendations --

CONTINUED:

GLADYS
(cuts him off -- but gently)
Max. Not now. Don't make decisions.

MAX
I know what you're thinking. And it makes sense. But it isn't like that. Eventually I'll work or do something. But I --
(picks up a design)
-- designed stuff like Nutty Nick stores for money. I liked doing it, because I liked supporting my family and being part of the world. Who was I to think I could do better than anyone else? I eat at McDonald's. I even kind of look forward to their French fries. So why should I disdain their architecture? I've never met a King, how can I expect to build cathedrals?

The staff just look and listen, mesmerized, amazed.

MAX
Don't you see the mistake I made? I thought I couldn't try anything else because I'm not an artist. I'm merely competent. But it has nothing to do with whether I'm good enough to design what I want to design. All I need is my own desire.

SCOTT
Money. You need money.

MAX
Yes, that's true. If I want to see my drawings built I need money. If I want to eat I need money. That's true. But Jeff has given me that.

Max gestures at the vacant swivel chair. Only:

Jeff is there: on the phone, talking away, bullshitting with a client, but there's no sound coming from his lips. He's a ghost.

MAX

relating to the living again.

MAX
He's given me the one thing he couldn't while alive. He's set me free.

GLADYS
Max, you're upset. Let me make you some tea.

MAX
No thanks. I love buildings. And that's what I'm gonna do.

SCOTT
What?

MAX
Look at them.

They're just dumbfounded.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jonah is in the foyer, bent over a stack of newspapers, ready to be thrown out. He pulls out several, including one garish New York Post headline:

NEW YORKER SAVES TOT AND TWENTY

TRACK WITH Jonah as he carries them into his room and tears out the relevant pages...

DISSOLVE TO:

JONAH

dressed in different clothes, tearing out an inside story -- without a big headline -- from the New York Times. There is a big diagram of the inside of a plane with arrows showing exits. The subdued headline reads:

SENATE STUDIES CANTON OHIO CRASH FOR NEW REGULATIONS

With the subhead:

Why One Man's Bravery Was Necessary

DISSOLVE TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE - JONAH

again dressed in different clothes, tearing out a feature story from New York Newsday showing a picture of Perlman standing with a few rather sad-looking people. The headline:

SPECIALIST MEETS WITH CRASH VICTIMS

Jonah pastes the article (beside many others we haven't seen) in a spiral notebook and carefully hides it in his nighttable.

DISSOLVE TO:

FAA DETERMINATION ON OHIO CRASH DUE

ANOTHER ANGLE - JONAH

tears out a truly buried and underplayed item in The Wall Street Journal. The crash has faded from public interest.

CUT TO:

INT. CARLA AND MANNY'S APARTMENT (LITTLE ITALY) - DAY

A tenement kitchen, but it's been meticulously replastered and painted. The appliances are modern. The decoration is working-class -- chintz curtains, smile face magnets on the fridge, and a tacky portrait of Jesus over the Formica kitchen table. Manny talks surreptitiously on the phone. He wears the handyman's uniform of a luxury Manhattan building.

MANNY
(to phone)
No, honey, I just got here from work. Can't. Not today. I'm going crazy...

The DOORBELL RINGS.

MANNY
Gotta go. That's them.
(soft)
Yeah, me, too.

INT. CARLA'S BEDROOM (LITTLE ITALY) - DAY

A small tenement bedroom in Little Italy. Heavy furniture, a big console color TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dark heavy drapes are drawn over the windows. There's a window air-conditioner, but it's off. We know because Carla lies in a heavy sleep on a messy bed in a T-shirt that's soaked through with perspiration. She's no longer wearing a cast on her leg. She is pale, drawn -- a beauty in utter despair, a soul dying.

Manny opens door and comes in.

MANNY
The doc's here --
(alarmed)
Carla! You crazy? It's a fucking oven.

Manny goes to the air conditioner and turns it on "Hi." Carla doesn't stir. Manny goes to the bedside, shakes her, lifts her from the bed. Her head hangs back: she is limp.

MANNY
Get up! The doc's brought somebody. The Good Samaritan. You read about him in the Post.

CARLA
Leave me alone.

Manny rubs her stomach and chest -- the T-shirt is translucent from sweat, revealing her body. Manny's look and touch are sexual. She's in an agony of grief, but she's beautiful.

MANNY
You're a mess. You gotta wash up.

CARLA
I wanna die.

Manny slaps her.

MANNY
That's a sin.

CARLA
(waking, angry)
Lemme die!

MANNY
That's a sin! You drag yourself to church every day. Don't Father Conti tell you that's a sin?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
I'm nc use to anybody.

MANNY
You been lying here three months! I can't take it no more. Come out and talk with the doc. Understand? You got to get it together. I don't want to have to put you away!

Carla remains in a sitting position, shoulders slumped, numb. Manny kisses her passionately. She doesn't respond.

MANNY
(tender)
You look good to me, babe.

INT. CARLA AND MANNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Perlman and Max waiting. Perlman is nervous; stands awkwardly. Max is fascinated by the workmanship of a wall of cabinets, the electric wiring, and the painting and plastering. Otherwise, the room is small and the furniture is tacky.

PERLMAN
I appreciate your help. She's in bad shape. As I told you on the phone, the baby's belt wasn't working. He was in her lap on impact.

MAX
(focused on workmanship)
Couldn't hold on, of course.

PERMAN
She's in a clinical depression. Drugs haven't worked... I'm considering hospitalization. She's obsessed with the crash, but won't talk. She's very primitive, very Catholic and Old World, you know?

MAX
(focused on workmanship)
No, I don't.

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
Full of guilt and shame.

MAX
(pays attention)
I'm full of guilt and shame. How is that Old World?

PERLMAN
You think I'm a fraud.

MAX
Doctor, in the three months since we flew together from Pittsburgh, I haven't thought about you.

Manny comes in. He is shy with Perlman and Max.

MANNY
Sorry. She'll be right out.

MAX
(gesturing to cabinetry)
You did this?

MANNY
Yeah...

MAX
Everything? The rewiring?

MANNY
Yeah. I was training myself for the job I got now -- handyman. I was assistant porter.

MAX
Beautiful work.

MANNY
You're an architect, right?

MAX
I retired.

There's an awkward silence.

MANNY
I better go get her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
I think it's better if I see her alone. You know? One crash freak to another.

Max moves toward the hall. As he goes, Manny looks at Perlman. Perlman nods. There's a silence, then Perlman talks in a whisper.

PERLMAN
He and your wife are the only survivors I can't reach. She won't talk and he won't admit the crash was bad.

MANNY
That right? He says it was good?

PERLMAN
Says it was the best thing that ever happened to him.

MANNY
You know the day we got home all these lawyers called, wanting our case. But one guy came to see me, told me he was the Good Samaritan's lawyer. I signed right then and there. Figured he must be the best.

INT. CARLA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Carla sits on a messy bed. She has dressed herself in jeans and a T-shirt, no makeup, and yet she's extraordinarily beautiful: an El Greco. Max stares at her. She looks past him, virtually catatonic. They have been sitting there for a while without talking. Then Max speaks without preamble, almost speaking to himself, rather than pointedly to Carla.

MAX
When I was thirteen, my father died in front of my eyes. We were walking out of our apartment building... I was tossing a softball up and down. Mom screamed. I missed the ball and turned to look: Dad was dead on the sidewalk. There was a little blood coming out of his nose... his legs were twisted under him.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MAX
He looked like somebody, somebody with a big hand, had just reached down and squeezed the life out of him.

CARLA
That was God.

MAX
That's what I thought -- God killed my daddy.

CARLA
Why did God want to kill him?

MAX
Couldn't figure that out. He was a religious man. Hard-working... kind to my mother and sister...

He stops.

CARLA
You loved him.

MAX
Yes. There was no reason to kill him. So I decided there was no God.

Carla is sitting up, attentive. She has gradually awakened during this conversation. She is out of herself for the first time since the crash.

CARLA
I go to church every day. Only place I go. I pray for my baby's soul.

MAX
(shakes head no)
You go there to talk to God.

CUT TO:

INT. MANNY AND CARLA'S LIVING ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

Max and Carla appear in the hallway, heading for the front door. As they pass, Max says matter-of-factly to Perlman and Brillstein.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
We're going to church.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY

Max and Carla walking in a hot late September day to St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, a small 18th Century church on the narrow block in Little Italy.

CARLA
You been to college, right?
(off Max's nod)
And you're Jewish, right?

MAX
Half.

CARLA
How can you be half?

MAX
My mother's Irish.

CARLA
Oh... So you're also Catholic. Let me ask you -- do Jewish people actually believe in God? I know Jews don't believe in Jesus, but tell you the truth -- I'm sorry, I know I'm being rude -- but I ask because it don't really seem like most Jews believe in God the Father either. Except for the ones with all the hair, the...

MAX
Hasidim. You're right. They're like devout Catholics. Jews like me... we're more like Mario Cuomo.

CARLA
You got it. People who go to college don't really believe in Him. I didn't go to college, but I'm not so stupid I'm going to believe Father Conti when he tells me Bubble is with Jesus playing a harp.

They have reached St. Patrick's Old Cathedral. Max stands aside to allow Carla to enter the church first.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Maybe he's playing a trombone.

For a moment, we don't know how Carla's going to react. She doesn't either, then she smiles.

CARLA
Yeah... if he was playing anything it would be a trombone.

INT. ST. PATRICK'S OLD CATHEDRAL - DAY

Carla lights a candle for Bubble and returns to a kneeling position. Max is beside her. He copies her actions, lighting a candle as well. They are alone in the church. Carla stays down and prays intensely in a whisper. Max watches. She finishes and looks at Max. He speaks in a respectful whisper.

MAX
Life and death happen for no reason. We think people are born because their mother wanted them a lot or because God needed another home run hitter to play for the Yankees. We think people die because they eat red meat or rob banks. That way, even though we can never be good enough or careful enough to live forever, at least we can try. But if it makes no sense and just happens, then there's no reason to do anything.

CARLA
There's no reason to love.

MAX
People don't so much believe in God as that they chose <u>not</u> to believe in nothing.

Carla looks at the crucifix. Then at Max. She rises.

CARLA
He hurt me... He hurt me forever. But I believe in Him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CARLA'S BUILDING (MULBERRY STREET) - DAY

Max and Carla outside the tenement vestibule. Carla is going in. Max hangs back on the sidewalk.

MAX
I've got my car parked around the corner. Let's go for a drive.

CARLA
(agitated)
No, I can't... Didn't the doctor tell you? I can't go anywhere else --

MAX
You'll be safe. You read about me in the papers. Everyone with me lived.

CARLA
You must think I'm very stupid.

MAX
No. I'm not lying. I can't explain it. But you're safe with me.

CARLA
What are you telling me? There's no God, but there's you.

Max moves close to her. He takes her hand in both of his.

MAX
Come with me, Carla. I promise you'll be safe.

Carla calms. Slowly, she smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S SAAB/EXT. CANAL STREET

Carla in passenger seat is very nervous. Max drives his Saab on Canal Street. He is content, relaxed.

CARLA
(wary)
Is this a German car?

MAX
Swedish.

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(nervous)
It's very sturdy.

MAX
It's a very safe car. Very safe and I'm an excellent driver. Never been in an accident. Not while I was behind the wheel anyway. And you know what?

CARLA
(very nervous)
What?

MAX
It doesn't mean we're going to survive this ride. Because even if I do everything right, even strapped in to the marvelous technology of the Saab's reinforced doors and roof, we could still be crushed.

For a moment, Carla is non-plussed. Then she laughs.

CARLA
That's reverse psychology, right?

MAX
No, it's the simple truth. In fact, you're not safe lying in your bed. On Mulberry Street you're less than a mile from one of the biggest faults in the U.S. Someday, maybe in a few minutes, there'll be a 7 plus earthquake. New York's not built for it. My guess is more than a million people would die immediately --

CARLA
You told me I was safe with you.

MAX
You are. We're safe because we died already.

CARLA
Stop the car!

CONTINUED:

Max pulls over. They are at a chaotic corner: HONKING TRUCKS, homeless people, vendors, workers. Carla frantically tries to open her door, but she can't manage the lock.

CARLA
Let me out!

Max calmly reaches over and opens the door. Carla peeks out at the mobbed street, full of busy, angry people. She shrinks back.

CARLA
I'm not dead!

MAX
That's not what I mean. Look at them...
(gestures at pedestrians)
They don't know what it's like to die in their heads. You do. You passed through death.

CARLA
That's bullshit! I didn't die in my head. My son died. I didn't think about dying, I thought about --

She stops abruptly.

MAX
About what? About how your son died?

CARLA
(cold, shuts down)
I wanna go home.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - DAY

Max comes in the front door.

MAX
Debby...?

Max listens. We hear the sounds of a NINTENDO VIDEO GAME. TRACK WITH Max DOWN a hallway INTO Jonah's room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jonah and FRIEND are huddled in front of a TV, playing Nintendo.

MAX
Hello...

FRIEND
(staring at screen)
Excellent move...

JONAH
I'm gonna die...

FRIEND
No! Die now and we get game over!

JONAH
(cool)
I died.

FRIEND
Let me try.

MAX
Hello!

JONAH
Hi. I got to Dr. Wily.

FRIEND
Yeah. And then he died.

MAX
Where's your mother?

JONAH
In the shower. Oh! And Byron's dad called. He's bringing him around three-thirty. Do I have to play with him?

MAX
No.

As Max leaves:

FRIEND (O.S.)
Is he the weird kid your father saved?

JONAH (O.S.)
Yeah... He comes here practically every day and hangs around my dad.

CONTINUED:

TRACK WITH Max THROUGH the hallway, DOWN TO the master bedroom. Debby is on the floor in a full lotus, meditating. She's wearing sweat pants and a T-shirt. They are dark with perspiration and tight to her dancer's figure.

Debby opens her eyes.

DEBBY
You okay?

MAX
Uh-huh.

DEBBY
Where did you go today?

MAX
I met the woman whose child died in the crash. I'm in love with her.

Debby rises, very gracefully, says nothing and exits into the bathroom. She shuts the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. PERLMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A shrink's office. Not fancy, but typical. Perlman is behind his desk. Debby is seated in a chair beside it.

PERLMAN
Fascinating...

DEBBY
Not for me. I feel angry and I can't say anything.

PERLMAN
Why can't you?

DEBBY
Because he's not himself.

PERLMAN
Who is he? I mean, how has he changed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
He was... sensitive, a good father, a little neurotic, but responsible. You could always rely on Max. He was my foundation.
(rambles on)
He certainly wouldn't shut down the business on a whim...

PERLMAN
(brings her back)
How do you feel about him?

DEBBY
The new Max? Or the man I married?

PERLMAN
Both.

DEBBY
I don't know...
(tries to think, then:)
I need him. I want my husband.
(sags)
This is humiliating.
(starts up)
And I hate this crazy truth telling. Like he's a robot.
(a plea)
Is it the truth? Does he love her?

PERLMAN
For twenty minutes your husband expected to die. He's suffering from battle trauma. Only it's worse for him. Soldiers go into battle knowing they will face death. Max got on a domestic flight to L.A.
(shakes his head)
He doesn't love her. Not in a realistic way.

DEBBY
That's exactly what scares me. Love isn't realistic.

Perlman nods and waits. Debby doesn't say anything.

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
I met him when I hurt myself... I told you -- I had to leave the ballet because of my injury. I was twenty and my life was over. Everything I had worked for...

Debby seems to fade out into the past. Perlman looks at her intently, seeing in her the lean, elegant and fragile beauty of the artist she was once.

PERLMAN
And Max helped you?

DEBBY
I was in mourning for my career. With him, those first years -- You don't understand, we were different. He loved me even though I wasn't special anymore...
(seems about to break down, then holds it to say)
I used to dance for him. He loved to watch me.

There's another painful silence. Perlman waits and then:

PERLMAN
What are you going to do?

DEBBY
What can I do?
(pensive)
This woman...

PERLMAN
Carla.

DEBBY
Did meeting Max help?

PERLMAN
Well, she's terrified of him.

DEBBY
Really...?

PERLMAN
Did her some good, though. She's agreed to come to the group meeting. Wish Max would.

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
It's been almost four months. You told me he would come back.

PERLMAN
I was wrong.

Perlman looks at her with the passive attitude of a shrink, as if there's something for her to do or say. When she doesn't:

PERLMAN
Maybe this Max is your husband.

CUT TO:

INT. DEBBY'S BALLET CLASS - CLOSEUP - DEBBY - DAY

Her face is intent and still and then...

She moves rapidly, doing a series of pirouettes. Only instead of stopping after one or two or three, she keeps going, faster and faster, her face moving from intense concentration to ecstasy. With each turn we PULL OUT FARTHER and reveal in b.g., in an anteroom, a group of children in tights (her students) with their mothers, waiting to enter for the next class. They watch her private dance in confusion.

CUT TO:

INT. JONAH'S ROOM - CLOSEUP - JONAH - NIGHT

in his bed, sweating from a high fever. Max is seated beside him, taking out Tylenol children's tablets.

MAX
You get two?

JONAH
I'm big for my age.

MAX
You get three.

Debby enters with her coat still on. While Max hands Jonah the tablets, Debby feels his forehead.

DEBBY
You're burning up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
A hundred and --

JONAH
-- Four point two.

MAX
Should I get a cold wash --

JONAH
No --

DEBBY
-- Yeah.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He is dressed in slacks and a clean shirt. He tosses a dirty shirt into a laundry bag in the closet and stops at the sight of something shoved into a dark corner.

It's a bag of books. Max picks it up and takes out a few. The titles are all psychological texts: Stress Reaction Syndrome; Counterphobia, etc.

INT. MAX'S AND DEBBY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

A small round eating table that sometimes doubles as extra counter space. Max and Debby are eating out of Chinese food takeout containers.

DEBBY
So come on. Tell me. What did you do all day?

MAX
I decided to look at just one detail. Concentrated on windows. Looked at thousands.

DEBBY
Un huh. What are you looking for?

MAX
I don't know.

DEBBY
Talk to me, honey. Please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
I'm talking. What you want to know?

DEBBY
(takes a beat, then:)
What happened in the plane?

MAX
I told you that.

DEBBY
Make me a part of it, Max.

MAX
You're not a part of it.

DEBBY
I'm here, Max. You're closer to Jeff than you are to me. And he's dead.

MAX
Jeff was decapitated.

She catches her breath.

MAX
His head was lying in the seat I moved from. I passed it on the way out.

DEBBY
Jesus...

MAX
You can't be a part of it.

There's a silence. Abruptly, Debby is galvanized. She gets up and pulls her dress open as she moves at Max.

DEBBY
I'm here. Come on. I'm here. Come on.

She climbs on him, sexy and passionate, but Max stops her. He gently lifts her off.

MAX
This won't work.

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
You're not well. I know you don't think so, but you're a mess.

MAX
I've never felt better.

DEBBY
You're guilty you survived the crash and Jeff didn't.

MAX
You're wrong. I understand how you could think that, but it's wrong.

DEBBY
Then correct me. What is it? That you don't want to be with me anymore?

MAX
I like being with you.

DEBBY
But you want to be with her more?

MAX
I love her.

Debby snaps. She stands up, upset and furious.

DEBBY
God damn you. How can you be this cold to me? I've lived with you for sixteen years. I love you.

MAX
Have I been a bad husband?

DEBBY
No. Don't you see? That's how I know this isn't what you really feel.

MAX
What I really feel is that I don't want to be scared ever again. I don't want to be afraid of knowing people, of feeling what I feel and saying what I think. I walked away from the crash with my life.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)
That's what survived. Just the taste and touch and beauty of life. I've never felt more real.

Debby stares at him for a beat, very upset and exits, saying:

DEBBY
You're insane, just insane...

CUT TO:

INT. BRILLSTEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

In a midtown building on Third Avenue. Brillstein has a small suite of characterless offices. One for him, a partner, and an outer space for two secretaries. Unlike his car his desk is immaculate. Nan, Debby, and Max are in chairs facing Brillstein.

BRILLSTEIN
Pain and suffering are compensable. Apart from other compensable losses such as the two million dollar Nutty Nick contract --

MAX
We didn't have a contract.

NAN
Oh God, Max! Whose side are you on?

DEBBY
Take it easy --

NAN
Don't tell me to take it easy! You've got a husband and the partnership insurance!

BRILLSTEIN
(cuts off argument)
I have a deposition from Mr. Nutty Nick that he had every intention of hiring Mr. Gordon and Mr. Klein. That's good enough.

MAX
He's lying. It's nice of him, but he's lying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRILLSTEIN
Do me a favor. Don't say that. They don't have to know your opinion, okay? Are you gonna work with me on this, Mr. Klein? You promised Mrs. Gordon to do your best for her and her children.

Max stands up. He walks to the window. The others watch him warily. He looks down at the sweeping view of Second Avenue.

MAX
You get a third of what we get, right?

BRILLSTEIN
I know, I'm terrible. One third is standard, Mr. Klein. Naturally I have an interest in getting as large a settlement as possible. In fact, that's my job. I don't apologize for it.

MAX
America in the nineties: Nobody apologizes -- they write a memoir.

BRILLSTEIN
Mr. Klein, this is the law, not some trick I invented. Each minute you and Mr. Gordon knew you were going to die is compensable as pain and suffering. Testify to the mental anguish you and Mr. Gordon experienced and each one of those minutes is worth dollars. Big dollars. Dollars you and Mrs. Gordon are entitled to.

Max strolls away from the window and speaks casually.

MAX
You want me to say Jeff wept at the prospect of his wife widowed, his children orphaned. It's a shame he was killed instantly. If only Jeff had been mashed up and died slowly in my arms -- Nan could really clean up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRILLSTEIN
(drops head on desk)
Good night.

DEBBY
(horrified)
Jesus, Max...
(turns to Nan)
He doesn't mean it. He's not --

NAN
Not himself? You're wrong. He's more Max than ever.
(gets up, faces him)
You're ashamed of me, is that it? I'm trying to make money off my dead husband -- so I don't meet your standards of widowhood. Let me ask you something. If Jeff was here what would he do?

Max is hit by this point. He can't answer. He trembles.

NAN
Come on, Max, tell me. If you had died and he had lived, what would he be willing to say to help Debby and Jonah? I know he ripped you off for the tickets --

BRILLSTEIN
We don't know that! Maybe he was going to pay him back!

NAN
(ignores Brillstein)
Are you punishing Jeff?

Max trembles violently.

MAX
Okay, okay! I'll say what you want.

Max turns and rushes out of the office.

TRACK WITH Max THROUGH outer office past surprised secretaries.

DEBBY (O.S.)
Max! Wait!

But he's out the door too fast.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Max runs up a flight of institutional fire stairs frantically.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Max appears out of a door from the stairs. He's breathless. We are forty-seven stories up. There's a sweeping, scary view of the East River.

CLOSEUP - MAX

The strain goes away and his face relaxes...

FLASHBACK - INT. TRANSCON PLANE - MAX AND JEFF - DAY

The plane is falling, out of control. The NOISE is deafening. They are rigid, heads pressed back into the seats. The plane is tilted to Max's left.

MAX
(angry)
We're going down!

JEFF
(pure terror)
Oh God...

Max fights the gravity to look at his partner. When he manages to catch Jeff's horrified eye:

MAX
I told you so!

Another WRENCHING SOUND from the wounded plane.

MAX'S POV

looks across aisle. A businessman has the Wall Street Journal folded in front of him to read it. But his mouth is open. Evidently he's screaming.

MAX'S POV

looks past aisle to far window. What he sees is sickeningly wrong: not the sky, but land. The plane is sideways, plummeting.

MAX

As the NOISE of the desperate machine just seems to get worse and worse and now is overwhelming.

SOUNDTRACK OFF -- In the silence, Max's voice, spoken in his head, is an intimate whisper to us:

MAX (V.O.)
This is it. This is the moment of your death.

Max shuts his eyes, resigned to his death and...

SOUNDTRACK ON -- It's LOUD. Maybe the machine is coming apart.

WIDE ANGLE

The cabin tilts back with a jolt, suddenly righting itself. The NOISE of the ENGINES CHANGES as well, from a tearing noise of desperation to a calmer, but still not normal, whirring.

It's a surprise to us and him but -- Max isn't scared at all. All terror has been flooded from him. END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Max beaming at the memory, he steps away from the door out onto the 47-story-high rooftop.

A stiff, unpredictable wind blows. He looks at the waist-high brick wall around the roof's perimeter. Max takes a few steps toward the wall. It's obvious that he's freaked by the height.

Max pauses. Shuts his eyes. Then opens them and walks purposefully right up to the wall. He studies the wall for a beat...

MAX

looks over the edge. Anyone would be scared by the sheer drop, the dizzying sense of flying above New York. Max looks up.

MAX
(addressing city)
I won't be scared of you anymore.

Max moves himself onto the low brick wall. He's lying on his belly. The wind blows furiously. Max shuts his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Slowly, almost painfully, Max rises onto his knees and hands. His eyes are still shut.

MAX

opens his eyes. Fear comes into them. He shuts them.

MAX
You can't live as a coward.

Max, eyes still shut, gets to his feet and stands straight. He is blind, atop the city.

MAX

opens his eyes.

He screams! A rebel yell of facing terror.

MAX'S POV

He is flying above the city. Nothing to stop him from dropping down to oblivion.

MAX

The rebel yell stops. He stands on the narrow ledge of the wall. His eyes are open.

Slowly, painfully, Max takes a step forward. He teeters briefly...

Unafraid, Max takes another step. A smile dawns.

Another step!

And another! Max is exhilarated. Another step and he reaches the corner. He is flying above New York, proud, defiant, the wind whipping his clothes, yet unable to budge him.

MAX

laughs with pleasure... not crazy, not hyper... at ease.

MAX'S POV

A groundless view of the glorious skyline, shimmering in the late afternoon light.

MAX

shuts his eyes and turns himself around and around on the narrow ledge, making himself dizzy and confused as to whether he is facing the fatal drop to the ground or the safety of the roof...

And then Max purposefully gambles with his life and blindly steps off the wall...

Max lands on the roof!

For a moment, at the discovery he is safe, Max has no reaction.

Then he laughs...

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW JERSEY SHERATON - DAY

Right outside the Holland Tunnel. In front of the main entrance there's a gathering of perhaps thirty people. They are survivors of the crash. Many embrace, pleased to be reunited. Some stand apart.

Perlman stands under the awning with an assistant.

Manny leads Carla up to the group. She leans against him, barely making the effort to support herself. She averts her eyes. Perlman steps forward to take her arm.

PERLMAN
You'll come with me, okay, Carla? We don't need Manny. He'll wait here.

Carla doesn't answer. She moves along passively with Perlman.

INT. SHERATON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Bland and empty except for thirty-odd folding chairs that have been arranged in a circle of two rows. There are empty seats here and there between the survivors. Perlman sits in the front row. Carla is behind him, almost hidden. The others are seated.

PERLMAN
There are no rules here. You don't have to be interesting. You don't have to be nice. You don't have to make sense.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN (CONT'D)
I know some of you have become friends in these past five months and you've shared your feelings. That's how we handle most bad things that happen to us in life. We talk to family, friends, ministers, shrinks... But that's not what this is.

Perlman moves to the center of the circle and sits on his haunches maneuvering slowly to look at each of them.

PERLMAN
We used to live in tribes. White, black, yellow. We lived in tribes. And when a tribe suffered a calamity -- a great flood, an exploding mountain, a shaking of the earth -- we sat around fires and retold the event, the stories of death and destruction, escape and rescue. I don't know why that helps -- but it does.
(beat)
Would someone tell us their story?

The Blonde Mother stands up.

BLONDE MOTHER
I lost my sister and my two nephews. Their seats were ripped away... Right in front of my eyes. I could almost reach out --

Blonde Mother gestures at her disappearing sibling... She sags, appears ready to break down. Two people stand up to comfort her.

PERLMAN
(sharply)
What's your name?

BLONDE MOTHER
What...?

PERLMAN
Could you say your name, just your first name, and then finish your story? Everyone else can sit. She can stand on her own.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLONDE MOTHER
(collecting herself)
Uh... I'm Jackie. Everybody calls me Jackie.

PERLMAN
Tell us about the crash. We don't only want to know who lived and died. Tell us what happened to you.

SEERSUCKER BUSINESSMAN
Jesus.
(stands up)
This is going to take forever. I can't stay. I've got to get back to the office.

PERLMAN
What's your name?

WILKENSON (SEERSUCKER BUSINESSMAN)
I'm John Wilkenson.

PERLMAN
Why were you on the plane that day?

WILKENSON
I was going to L.A. on business.

PERLMAN
You must be very committed to your work.

Wilkenson, who has been buttoning his suit jacket, preparing to go, is brought up short. He stares at Perlman for a beat.

WILKENSON
I'm sorry about the interruption.

And Wilkenson sits back down in his chair to listen. Perlman gestures for Jackie, the Blonde Mother, to continue.

JACKIE (BLONDE MOTHER)
We were taking a vacation, my sister and me and our kids -- you know, no husbands. We were going to see all the dumb tourist sights together -- like when we were girls, only this time we were also mommies. Now we'll never be together again...

Starts to lose it.

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
Let's just talk about the day of the crash. What happened to you when the plane hit?

JACKIE
I don't know... I guess I closed my eyes. There was incredible noise. I couldn't see. I was choking on the smoke and that man -- Is he here?

JACKIE
(asks crowd)
Are you here? Max Klein?

PERLMAN
Couldn't come.

JACKIE
Oh. He saved my life.

PERLMAN
How did he do that?

JACKIE
He was shouting -- 'Follow me! This way!' I had hold of my kids and I followed his voice. He sounded so normal. 'Follow me to the light!' I was scared to. The light looked like a fire, but I saw him jump into it. So I followed and then we were in the cornfield... safe. I would've gone the wrong way. I came today hoping to thank him.

A MALE SURVIVOR stands up.

MALE SURVIVOR
Same thing happened to me.

A WOMAN SURVIVOR stands up.

WOMAN SURVIVOR
I followed him too.

CARLA

listens to Max's heroism with a mix of wonder and upset. She's come out of her listless catatonia -- but she's agitated.

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN (O.S.)
Excuse me? You're leaving us?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN

An elderly woman is by the door, trying to leave unobtrusively.

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
(nervous)
I don't belong here. I wasn't on the plane.

PERLMAN
Who are you?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
My son died in the crash. I'm sorry...

PERLMAN
It's okay. Why did you come?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
I don't know... I wanted... If anyone had seen my son... or knew how he... I'm sorry...

She moves again toward door.

VOICES
1. Who was he? --
2. Where was he sitting? --

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
They said he was in twenty-one C.

ELDERLY MAN
That was right behind me. Did he have red hair?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
No... Brown.

ELDERLY MAN
Kind of reddish brown?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
Maybe it looked --

ELDERLY MAN
Tall man?

CONTINUED:

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
Six feet.

A YOUNG MAN fitting that description stands.

YOUNG MAN
(to Elderly Man)
You mean me. Remember? We talked at the hospital. Actually, we were on the other side of the plane.

ELDERLY MAN
Sorry... Since it happened I get confused.

PERLMAN
Anyone else remember that row?

CARLA'S POV

Just to her right is a Red-Haired Young Woman and a Middle-Aged Man. The Redhead speaks to Middle-Aged Man in a whisper.

REDHEAD
Twenty-one C was three rows ahead of me. They were smashed flat.

PERLMAN (O.S.)
Anyone else have information?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Go ahead. Speak up.

CARLA

Very agitated. She gets up before the Redhead can.

CARLA
(shouts at Perlman)
Stop it! Let her go!

The Gray-Haired Woman is startled. Perlman moves at Carla, eager to engage with her.

PERLMAN
Why?

CARLA
This isn't doing any good!

CONTINUED:

PERLMAN
What harm can it do? She only wants to know what happened to her son.

CARLA
My son died.

PERLMAN
But you know how he died. You were with him.
(to Gray-Haired Woman)
When was the last time you saw your son?

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
His birthday. About a month before. I don't remember kissing him goodbye.
(mumbles)
I know I did, I just can't remember.
(to Carla)
You're very young.

CARLA
I'm not young.

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
How old was your boy?

CARLA
He was almost two.

GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN
I'm sorry. He wasn't with you for very long.

CARLA

Doesn't cry. But she brings her hands to her mouth and looks inward. Upset, but withdrawn. In b.g., an argument:

JOHN WILKENSON
Jesus Christ! This is sadistic! We're not accomplishing anything!

PERLMAN
Why do we have to accomplish something?

CONTINUED:

Lisa, the flight attendant, rises from one of the chairs and comes toward Carla. She looks depressed and enervated, not madeup, or anything like what a flight attendant normally resembles.

LISA
(to Carla)
Hello. Remember me? I'm Lisa. The Flight Attendant?

CARLA
(focuses on her; takes a beat)
Sure...

LISA
I really wanted to see you. I came mostly to see you.
(almost a plea)
I think about you and your baby a lot. Remember I tried to help you with the seatbelt?

CARLA
(rising anger)
Help me? You told me everything was going to be okay. You think you helped me?

LISA
I tried --

Perlman tries to come between the women. Carla keeps on at Lisa.

CARLA
You told me to hold him! I couldn't! You said it was going to be okay.

LISA
No -- don't say that --

CARLA
You said it! Everything's going to be okay! It wasn't okay! He died!

Lisa sobs into Perlman's chest. He's furious with Carla.

PERLMAN
That's enough! You've said it! That's enough!

CONTINUED:

CARLA
It's never enough! You want everybody to talk -- but only to say nice things! My baby died!

PERLMAN
If all you can do is blame people then I want you to go!

CARLA
I'll go. I'll be happy to go!

There's a kind of healthiness to the energy of her anger. Carla moves with a brisk step toward the door.

INT. SHERATON LOBBY - DAY

Carla moves energetically toward the doors scanning for Manny. She's eager to see him. She looks flushed: pretty and alive. She stops at the sound of something.

MANNY (O.S.)
Oh, baby, you know I love you.

CARLA

Whips around to see Manny -- or rather, the back of Manny -- standing at a public phone, talking. He is virtually in tears.

MANNY
(to phone)
Don't leave me, baby. I can't handle this by myself. I need you, baby.

Carla approaches him, slowly, comprehending with each step that he is talking to a lover.

MANNY
(to phone)
I can't do that to her now. She's crazy with grief. When she's better I can be with you all the time.

Carla is right behind him. She grabs a handful of his hair and yanks his head back.

Manny yelps, lets go of the phone and swings around, furious.

MANNY

seeing that it's Carla, he's terrified.

MANNY AND CARLA

CARLA
You fucking bastard! You'll cry for her! You won't show me a tear for our dead son! But you'll cry for a whore!

Manny sinks to his knees.

MANNY
Honey, you don't understand.

CARLA

Dark now, anger gone, hopelessness returning:

CARLA
I understand, Manny. I understand you're going to burn in hell.

CUT TO:

INT. BUBBLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Windows open to the cold air. An exhausted Carla has slumped on a twin bed that is covered in plastic. A crib, toys, other baby things are in the center of the room, covered by a sheet. The room is halfway through being painted. It was blue; it's turning white. Carla sits on the bed looking out the window. It's so cold in the room her breathing is visible.

Manny appears in the doorway.

MANNY
You sleeping here?

Carla nods, barely.

MANNY
I told her.
(waits a beat)
I told her I can't see her no more. So that's that. It's over.

Carla doesn't answer. Or even move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANNY
I talked to Mr. Brillstein, the lawyer, today. He said they're going to take those depositions in a month.

CARLA
When you get your blood money, Manny, I want you to move out.

Carla lies down on the bed and shuts her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY

Max is on the sidewalk, across the street from Carla's There are Christmas lights being put up by storeowners as well as decorations in the windows.

Max's face is red from the cold. He's obviously been standing there for a long time.

MAX'S POV

Manny is at the window watching him. The next window over opens. Carla sticks her head out.

CARLA
You'll freeze. Come up!

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CARLA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Typical dingy tenement staircase and hallway. No hint of the cleanliness and modernity of Manny's work inside. As Max climbs the last flight up, Manny, in his handy-man's workclothes, appears.

MAX
Hi.

Manny seems undecided about whether to punch Max or let him in. He stands in the way.

MAX
You going to work?

MANNY
(steps aside)
Yeah. I gotta work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carla appears at the door. She ignores Manny's departure and he doesn't say anything.

CARLA
(to Max)
What are you doing out there?

Carla is dressed in old jeans and a T-shirt. They are splattered with white paint. She is severely depressed, but angry, not catatonic.

MAX
Hoping to see you.

CARLA
Why didn't you ring the bell?

MAX
Perlman said you weren't talking to anybody.

CARLA
I ain't talking to him.

MAX
You're painting?

CARLA
I'll show you.

INT. BUBBLE'S ROOM - DAY

A small bedroom. Painting paraphernalia is on the floor. The window is open, the one Carla called to Max from. The room was blue and is being painted white. Max and Carla are at the doorway.

CARLA
This is my room now.

MAX
Want to go for a drive? In my very safe car?

CARLA
Where to?

MAX
Beautiful Staten Island.

CARLA

She would laugh at the idea if she had the energy to.

CARLA
You take me to all the best places.

MAX
There's a dock I want to see. It's where they haul ghost boats.

CARLA
Ghost boats?

MAX
Old boats to be scrapped for junk.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - DAY

Max and Carla in the Saab as it's waved into the belly of the boat to park their car. Max is first in line and pulls up to chain at the front. They get out, walk to the edge and study the view of New York Bay while the ferry loads up on cars and people.

CARLA
(playfully, but serious)
Is this safe?

MAX
No. It's had accidents. I think there are more boating accidents than any other kind.

CARLA
I can't swim.

MAX
I'd like to make this ferry sound especially dangerous, but it isn't. Best thing is we'll get a great view of the city.

The ferry starts with a lurch. Carla is startled and clutches Max. He looks at her. She smiles sheepishly.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - UPPER LEVEL - DAY

Max and Carla alone on the open deck. Cold, sunny and beautiful: A SWEEPING VIEW of the harbor, Manhattan behind, Statue of Liberty ahead. The wind blasts them.

CONTINUED:

CARLA
We're gonna freeze.

MAX
We are freezing.

But they don't go in. They stand arm in arm. Max turns Carla toward Manhattan.

MAX
Look...

The glorious Manhattan skyline, shimmering in the sun.

CARLA
It is beautiful.

MAX
That's what made me believe I was gonna be somebody special. I used to think it was my Dad dying ... But it's that city.

CARLA
Makes everybody think they've gotta be special...

For a beat, they both look at the imperious city silently.

MAX
My wife is angry at me.

CARLA
I'm fighting with Manny. Anyway, we're not talking.

MAX
You're too cold. Let's go in.

INT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - DAY

Enclosed upper deck. Max and Carla sit on a wooden bench. They have bought takeout coffee from the concession stand.

CARLA
What's your wife angry about?

MAX
I told her I'm in love with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(shocked)
You're crazy!

MAX
That's what she thinks.

CARLA
Well, she's right. Jesus...

MAX
It's what I feel. I'm not gonna lie about what I feel.

CARLA
You're supposed to lie about what you feel. Only way to keep everybody from each other's throats.

MAX
You want me to lie to you? Tell you you're safe? Tell you Bubble's up there, wearing little wings, looking down at us?

CARLA
(slaps him on the arm)
Shut up. I'm talking about them, the living. They can't take it. You can't go by me. I'm as crazy as you.

MAX
You're not crazy, Carla. You're very sad. And you've got a right to be.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY

Max and Carla climb the steps to her building. Carla pauses at the door and turns to Max. He moves close to her.

MAX
Thanks for coming...

Max kisses her on the lips, briefly. Max is shy about the kiss. He backs away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
You know, if Manny has any interest in doing carpentry full-time, there are people I can talk to who'd be happy to have a worker like him.

CARLA
Don't talk about my husband.

MAX
Sorry.

CARLA
I'm angry at him. That's why.

MAX
Oh...

CARLA
Don't look so scared.

MAX
I'm not scared. I'm not scared of anything.

CARLA
You're scared to kiss me.

MAX
I did kiss you.

CARLA
(smiles)
I mean for real.

MAX
I don't want to offend you.

CARLA
You're right. I don't want to be kissed. I don't want anything --

Carla turns to the door. Then turns back:

CARLA
-- but I want to go with you the next time you take a drive.

She goes inside. Max smiles...

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jonah stands next to a menorah, set up on the dining room table, holding the central candle and lighting one lower candle as he recites a prayer in Hebrew. It's very casual, very reform.

Behind and beside him are: Max, Debby, Nan, Sam, Jake, Gail, Sarah, Byron and Peter Hummel. There are presents on the table.

JONAH
(rapidly: bored and embarrassed)
... asher, kidshanu, b'mitvotav v'tzivanu, le hadleekner, shel Hanukkah.

During the above, Nan nags Sam, her eldest:

NAN
How about you? What's the point of all these Hebrew lessons?

SAM
So I can clean up when I'm thirteen.

Jonah has finished.

GAIL
(claps)
Beautiful...

Jonah, Sam and four-year-old Jake jump at their presents. Byron stands quietly beside his father.

Max steps in front of the boys, blocking their way to the gifts.

MAX
Do it again. Recite the prayer loud and clear. You join in, Sammy.

DEBBY
Max...

GAIL
It was lovely -- calm down.

MAX
I will not preside over this hypocrisy. They can have all the gifts they want --

CONTINUED:

JAKE
I'll take 'em!

MAX
And I'll give 'em to you with or without the blessing. But if we're going to do it, then God damn it, let's do it with pride!

The others fall back into a scolded silence. Not Jonah:

JONAH
SuperDad II -- He's back, and this time it's personal.

Sam, Jake and Debby laugh. Byron solemnly says to Max:

BYRON
I'll do it. Jonah has to teach me the words. But I'll do it.

PETER
Stay out of this, Byron.

Jonah gives Byron a sour look. He faces Max.

JONAH
I'm not doing it again.

MAX
Fine. Then that's the last time we'll bother with lighting the menorah.
(steps aside)
Take your presents.

Jonah goes to the table. He shoves his gift onto the floor.

JONAH
I don't want the stupid present.

Flushed with emotion, Jonah runs from the room.

JAKE
I do!

GAIL
Max, you've made a disaster out of what was a perfectly lovely celebration.

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
Give him a break, Max. He's a little boy.

Debby turns to go after Jonah.

MAX
And if it was up to you, he'd stay that way.

This spins Debby around. She can't hold in her anger any longer.

DEBBY
No, Max. I want him to grow up to be a pompous self-centered man like you.

This is so naked the others are embarrassed. Max isn't surprised or hurt. But he is certain and merciless:

MAX
Being me. That's what really scares you, isn't it? An imitation of a man, that's what you love. I'm sorry, but he's dead. You refuse to bury him, but he's dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. MULBERRY STREET - DAY

Carla, vibrant and pretty, stands on the street. Max drives up in his Saab. She hops in eagerly.

CARLA
Where to?

MAX
Beautiful Jersey city.

Carla laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERSEY CITY - DAY

Sunny and cold winter day. Max and Carla drive through a hodgepodge of new buildings next to burnt-out hulks, abandoned warehouses beside new stores. Carla seems relaxed in the passenger seat. They stop at a light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
It's a mess.

MAX
Yeah... it was going to be gentrified and rebuilt. Then the recession hit.

CARLA
This country's falling apart.

MAX
Yep. The United States is finished. But you and me -- we're in peak condition.

EXT. NEWPORT MALL PARKING LOT (JERSEY CITY) - DAY

Max parks. The enclosed mall is in b.g. There are lots of cars and people going in and out, loaded with Christmas presents.

MAX
Hungry?

CARLA
(nods at mall)
In there?

MAX
I didn't pack a lunch.
(as she's still doubtful)
Remember. We're ghosts. They can't do anything to us.

CARLA
You're crazy. You're really nuts. You know that?

MAX
You should talk.

Max gets out and goes around to her side of the car. He opens the door for her and extends a hand. Carla takes it, but slowly, almost suspiciously.

INT. NEWPORT MALL - DAY

An almost pretty white structure, three stories high, with skylights and an open center to look from one level to another. Its metal beams are revealed.

CONTINUED:

Everywhere there are Christmas decorations. And everywhere there are shoppers, in particular families, especially mothers and children.

MAX AND CARLA

They have entered on the third level. Carla surveys the strung lights, fake reindeer, store displays, and all the people.

CARLA
It's pretty...

Max smiles and guides her gently into the flow.

CARLA'S POV - SERIES OF SHOTS

A) A mother runs after a breakaway toddler, chortling as he races into a toy store.

B) A gang of giggling teenage girls with big hair go flouncing past two exaggeratedly sullen teenage boys who pretend not to notice.

C) A harassed father is handed yet one more Christmas package to add to the load he's already carrying. He can't handle it and they all tumble onto the floor.

D) A pretty five-year-old girl in a new dress beams as she's handed an ice cream cone. She takes one lick and the top scoop falls off, smearing her immaculate dress. Her mother shrieks and dabs at the dress while the girl bawls.

CARLA AND MAX

Walking arm-in-arm past the above shot.

CARLA
(means it sincerely)
They're so happy...

Carla pauses at something.

CARLA'S POV

An overweight mother carrying an infant in a Snugli. The mother peers into a shoe store window and absent-mindedly kisses the baby's soft head over and over -- little tender kisses.

CARLA

is pulled over to the mother and infant. She sticks her head next to them, becoming part of their intimacy. But the mother and baby don't notice or react to her. Max tugs at Carla. As she moves with him:

CARLA
Maybe I am a ghost.

Max and Carla walk to the edge of the walkway. Down below, in an open central area, is a Santa. A long line of children and parents wait to take a picture with him.

ANOTHER ANGLE - CARLA

She is very sad. She's so weak from the emotion, Max takes her arm. Carla looks at him. Behind him are Christmas lights, there are CAROLS playing OVER the SPEAKERS, and shoppers pass continuously.

CARLA
I was going to buy him lots of toys.

Carla leans against the rail, ready to weep. Max sticks his head in and interrupts her tears.

MAX
Let's buy them. What did he like? How about a sword? My son used to love swords. He still does but he's too old to admit it.

CARLA
What...?

MAX
What would your son like for Christmas? Does he play with Legos? No, he's too young. How about Bristle Blocks? Does he have them? They're great. Babies can use 'em and older kids like them for years.

She isn't in despair any longer, but she's confused, uncertain.

CARLA
You want me to buy presents for Bubble?

CONTINUED:

MAX
Bubble is really his name?

CARLA
Leonardo. I called him Bubble. You want me to buy presents for him? That's sick.

MAX
Why?

CARLA
Because he's dead. It's gonna make me feel bad to pretend he's not.

MAX
Of course Bubble is dead. But your wish to give him presents isn't dead. I like giving presents too. So let's do it.

Max tugs at her. She shakes him off angrily.

CARLA
Are you serious? You're not. You wouldn't do this. You gonna buy a present for your father?

MAX
My father...
(thoughtful)
I never bought him anything...

Max sags against the railing, apparently hurt. Carla is worried.

CARLA
I'm sorry. I didn't... It's not a good idea, that's all I meant.

Max isn't upset, however. He turns to her, eager:

MAX
I made him something in school. I carved his name in wood. You know, a nameplate to put on his desk. But I was thirteen when he died. Never had a chance to buy him a real present.
(takes hold of her)
Let's do it! Let's buy presents for the dead.

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(pulls away)
I can't!

MAX
Why?

CARLA
(almost shouts)
Who do we give them to!

MAX
Who cares about that?
(takes her arm)
Come on. I know what my daddy wants!

Max pulls her through the crowds of shoppers toward the down escalator. At first, Carla is tugged without enthusiasm. But she finally moves with him, curious.

INT. NEWPORT MALL - SEARS - DAY

Max almost runs through various sections. Now Carla moves under her own steam, behind him.

Max comes to a stop.

MAX
There it is!

TOOL CHEST

A huge red tool chest, its many drawers open, displaying dozens of tools that fit precisely into the space allotted by the chest.

MAX AND CARLA

She is out of herself, fascinated by Max. Max is almost transported by his memories:

MAX
He liked to build things. Shelves, chairs... Made our dining room table. He'd give me a hammer and sometimes let me do the easy stuff.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)
When we had to get something at the hardware store, Dad would stop in front of one of these -- they weren't as magnificent as this one -- and be totally silent for a long time. Then he'd say, 'I'd like to have that,' and walk away... Only thing I ever heard him say he wanted.

Carla is moved by his emotion. A SALESMAN appears.

SEARS SALESMAN
Can I help you?

MAX
I want to buy that for my father.

SEARS SALESMAN
That's a professional chest. Is your father more of a weekend handyman?

MAX
He's dead.

SEARS SALESMAN
Uh huh.

MAX
I want to buy this one. Can you ship it to him by Christmas?

SEARS SALESMAN
Uh... okay. What's his address?

CARLA

Smiling at Max as he gives the Salesman a credit card.

CUT TO:

INT. TOYS 'R US - DAY

Carla and Max run past shelves of toys as if rushing to make a deadline.

CARLA
You get Bubble the Bristle Blocks. I got plenty on my list.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWPORT MALL - SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

Max and Carla come out of Toys 'R Us loaded with shopping bags of toys.

Max and Carla leave their packages at a wrapping stand next to a Food Court, a central area with table and chairs surrounded by various food kiosks. The sign over the wrapping stand announces that the fee for the wrapping goes to help Babies with AIDS.

Max and Carla carrying two trays of food. They have ordered something from each of the various stands: A hot dog; an eggroll; a slice of pizza; a bucket of fried chicken.

CUT TO:

INT. FOOD COURT - DAY

Carla, blowing her cheeks out to show she's stuffed, reacting as Max arrives with another tray, this time of desserts.

Prominent among them is a bowl of strawberries. Max offers one to Carla and then eats one himself. As he lets his hand drop, Carla takes it. They hold hands while their eyes meet and linger.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWPORT MALL - NIGHT

Max and Carla carrying wrapped packages. They are surprised by the fact that it's dark and pause to look at the sky.

CARLA
It's night.
(smiles at him)
Where are we going?

MAX
We could disappear.

They walk toward Max's car in an enchanted state. They put all the gifts in the trunk. Carla moves to the door and gets in.

EXT./INT. MAX'S SAAB (JERSEY CITY) - NIGHT

Carla pulls the SEAT-BELT across her and it CLICKS:

CLOSEUP - CARLA

distressed by the sound and a memory it provokes.

BACK TO SCENE

Max drives on a street parallel to the water. Carla comes out of the memory.

CARLA
(tremulous)
There's something I want to tell you that nobody knows.
(as Max nods and waits)
Do you remember? Just as the wheels first touched, it was like we were landing okay...
(as Max nods; choked, ashamed:)
I let go of Bubble...

Carla's voice is in so much pain, Max pulls over immediately. They are next to a seawall, taller than the view of the harbor.

CARLA
Do you remember? I thought we were gonna be safe...

MAX
For a second it seemed okay.

CARLA
(she's back in the crash)
I had him in my lap. I looked at the runway... I thought we were safe and when the wheels bumped, I clapped... I let go...
(a whisper of horror)
I was safe in my belt and he wasn't.

MAX
I see. So it was your fault.

Max is speaking for her, but she accepts it as truth, listening in terror, eyes wide, mouth slack, pleading almost...

MAX
It wasn't the accident...

CARLA
I wasn't holding him!

MAX
You killed your baby.

CARLA
And the lawyer...

CONTINUED:

MAX
Brillstein...

CARLA
I didn't tell him the truth... Manny wants the money and I have to...

MAX
I understand. You're also a liar.

CARLA
I'm very weak...

Carla bows her head, shuts her eyes, locks her fingers into a double fist and prays in a furious whisper.

CARLA
Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Max wants to bring her out of it. He touches her shoulder.

MAX
Carla, it's not your fault.

But she's keening now, rocking back and forth, completely withdrawn, oblivious to him and the world, praying desperately:

CARLA
Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

MAX
Carla, stop! You're not to blame!

CARLA
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

MAX
Okay, that's enough!

CARLA
Holy Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee --

Max is too upset to listen. He gets out of the car.

EXT. JERSEY CITY - NIGHT

Max looks through the window and sees that she's still going on, in a state of madness, a madness he feels he's driven her into. He is bewildered for a moment. Then he walks to her side of the car, opens the door. She looks right through him and doesn't seem to hear what he says:

CARLA
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners --

MAX
I'm gonna take you home, okay?

CARLA
-- now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Hail Mary, full of Grace --

MAX
You couldn't have held on, no matter what. Don't you understand? We were going hundreds of miles an hour --

CARLA
Blessed art thou amongst women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Max shuts the door. He sags... He berates himself:

MAX
Of course she thinks it was her fault! God gave her a child: it was her job to keep him safe.

Max walks to the seawall and thinks. In b.g., we see Carla continue her mad penance. Max comes to a decision.

TRUNK

It opens, empty but for a red plastic emergency box and a blanket.

Max tests the weight of the box and finds it wrong. He opens the box and dumps it contents of jumper cables and other sundries.

Max goes back to the seawall. At is base, among other garbage, are two chipped red bricks.

EMERGENCY BOX

Max places the brick inside, shuts it, wraps the blanket around it and uses electrical tape (dumped from the box) to keep it on.

INT. SAAB - CARLA - NIGHT

as she prays, the door opens. Max unfastens her seatbelt.

CARLA
-- pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen --

MAX
I want you to sit in the back.

Carla looks him in the eyes as he pulls her out, but she continues praying.

CARLA
Hail Mary, full of Grace --

MAX
I'm just moving you to the back --

Max gets her out. She stays stiff and prays throughout. Max moves her into the back seat in the middle, not behind either bucket seat. Meanwhile:

CARLA
Blessed art thou amongst women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Max puts the middle seat lap belt around her and hands her the emergency box, wrapped in the blanket and weighted by the bricks.

MAX
That's your baby. Hold him upright.

At last, Carla stops praying.

MAX
This is Bubble. This is your chance to hold on tight and save him.

Carla stares at the box and then takes it, hugging it in her lap.

Max shuts the door. He races around to the driver's side, getting in. Carla clutches the box and watches him, pale, mesmerized, crazy.

CONTINUED:

Max puts on the seat-belt, STARTS the CAR and pulls into the empty avenue.

MAX
Did you pray in the plane?

Carla clutches the box, but doesn't answer. Max hits the accelerator.

SPEEDOMETER

Climbing past thirty miles an hour.

MAX (O.S.)
Did you pray in the plane?

CARLA

Clutching the box. She shakes her head no.

MAX'S POV

About two blocks ahead, the avenue makes a sweeping turn toward the water, around a long brick factory wall. If Max goes straight they will hit the wall head on.

ACCELERATOR

Max's foot presses down on the pedal.

MAX AND CARLA

MAX
Hold on to him! Pray to God to give you the strength to save your baby!

CARLA
(intense whisper)
Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee --

They are going fast, straight at the brick wall --

MAX
Hold onto your baby!

Carla clutches the box -- The brick wall looms --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
Blessed art thou amongst women.
Blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God --

MAX

as he is about to hit the brick wall.

MAX
Pray for us now and at the hour of
our death...

EXT. JERSEY CITY - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

The Saab hits the curb, and flies up, several feet off the ground... SMASHING head on into the brick wall.

INT. SAAB - CARLA - DAY

Her arms are wrapped around the box. The front WINDSHIELD EXPLODES! Her body is jerked forward with tremendous force and her arms are flung open --

SLOW MOTION -- Carla's amazed look as she watches the box hurtle away from her into the invading brick wall...

REAL-TIME MOTION -- Carla is stopped by the lap belt and flung back. The deafening noise of the CRASH ends.

CARLA'S POV - BOX

Where the windshield used to be, it's imbedded in the brick wall, smashed into half of its size.

Max's bloody face appears. He looks bad, but he's conscious.

MAX
(a wild grin)
You see...? No one could hold on.
Not even God.

CARLA

she looks at his bloody smiling face, comprehending Max's lesson at same moment that she faints away...

CUT TO:

CARLA'S DREAM - EXT. LAWN - DAY

Carla sits alone on a beautiful green lawn.

CARLA

She looks down tenderly at something.

Now Carla is breast-feeding an infant. She closes her eyes.

BUBBLE

A toddler, standing a few feet off, laughing at Carla and then running away from her.

Carla runs after him. She giggles as she catches him.

BUBBLE
I'm going bed...

Bubble runs away from her... Until a man's hand catches him.

MAX

It's his hand. He smiles back to Carla.

MAX
I'll get him home safe.

MAX AND BUBBLE

They walk off hand in hand into a blue horizon.

END OF DREAM SEQUENCE

CUT TO:

EXT. JERSEY CITY - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

of the accident. The Saab is buried in the wall. Max and Carla are unconscious. There are people arriving and SIRENS in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - DAY

Brillstein and Carla in a small waiting room near the Emergency Room.

CARLA
He's gonna be okay. He's got a concussion, but --

BRILLSTEIN
I know, I know. What did he do? Try to kill himself?

CARLA
No. He was showing me something.

BRILLSTEIN
Show you what? That brick walls are hard?

CARLA
He was showing me I couldn't hold on to Bubble no matter what.

BRILLSTEIN
Didn't you know that? Why do you think they have seat-belts? That's why our case is strong, because your son's belt wasn't working --

Manny enters. Carla ignores Brillstein and turns to Manny.

CARLA
Hello, Manny.

MANNY
You're talking to me?

CARLA
I'm talking to you. You listening?

BRILLSTEIN
I was just explaining to your wife --

CARLA
(cuts him off)
You don't understand. The flight attendant told me to hold him.

BRILLSTEIN
Yes, but --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
Shut up for a second.
(to Manny)
I wasn't holding tight to Bubble when we crashed. I thought I could've saved him. Max showed me I couldn't've. No matter what. No matter how hard I prayed. No matter how much I loved him.

MANNY
He crashed the car...

CARLA
To show me... yeah.

MANNY
That's it! That fucking nut won't get in ten feet of you!

BRILLSTEIN
Excuse me. Just one thing. Our case is good. Really good. Nothing to be concerned about, but --

CARLA
You're not gonna ask me to lie?

BRILLSTEIN
No, no, no, no. Not lie. I would never, ever advise you to lie. But, as I'm sure your husband understands, you don't have to tell things you aren't asked --

CARLA
Mr. Brillstein, I'm not gonna lie about the death of my son for any reason.

MANNY
Woman, are you crazy?

CARLA
No. I'm not. I want you to take me home now.

Carla heads for the door.

MANNY
They killed him! They have to pay!

CONTINUED:

BRILLSTEIN
Of course, don't worry!

MANNY
You listening to me!

CARLA
No.

She leaves. Manny kicks a chair hard. It skids across the room.

MANNY
They're responsible! Not her!

BRILLSTEIN
Let me work on it. Take it easy.

MANNY
Yeah, you work on it!

He storms out. Brillstein sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max in bed, sleeping. His head is bandaged, the lacerations on face have been stitched, and are also covered with white strips. They give him the appearance of a Native American wearing war paint.

Debby sits in a chair staring at him. Jonah stands beside her. He looks unhappy. Max is staring ahead. He moves his head and seems to notice Debby and Jonah for the first time. Max motions for Jonah to come closer. Jonah responds immediately, almost eagerly, moving to the bed. But he doesn't speak and avoids a direct look into his father's eyes.

MAX
Have you heard any talk about how I don't want to live?
(as Jonah nods shyly)
It's nonsense. More than anything I want to live, especially because I'm your father.
(as Jonah doesn't react)
I don't just happen to be your Dad. I want to be.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX (CONT'D)
(as Jonah looks away)
Look at me.
(as Jonah does)
You can't lose me because I don't want to be lost.

JONAH
That's good.

MAX
When I'm better I'm going to show you and Sam and Jake the Zuckerman house. It's a pretty good design that Jeff and I did. I want to teach you boys about architecture.

JONAH
I don't want to learn about that.

MAX
I'm your father. That means I'm your teacher. It's the only thing I know how to teach. You don't have to be good at it. You don't have to like it. But I have to teach it to you.

JONAH
(smiles)
You're the boss.

MAX
That's right.

Max is satisfied. He winces as if he's feeling pain and shuts his eyes.

JONAH

Looks uncertainly at Debby. She motions him over. She whispers:

DEBBY
Go to the waiting room and stay with Grandma. I'll be right out.

Jonah leaves. Debby stands up and moves toward Max, staring at him.

MAX

His eyes open. Max looks at her almost blindly, as if he cannot see. There's a terrible silence, full of tension. At last:

DEBBY
Do you want to talk?

Max says nothing, staring out of his unseeing eyes at her. He shakes his head, shuts his eyes, and turns away.

CUT TO:

INT. CARLA'S HALLWAY - DAY

A hand knocks on the door. Carla answers. She's dressed up, her hair is done, and she's wearing makeup. She looks pretty, but a working class woman's idea of being done up. She's almost perky.

DEBBY

She did the knocking.

DEBBY
I'm Max's wife.

CARLA
Oh... Nice to meet you. I just talked to the hospital. They said he's better.

DEBBY
May I come in?

CARLA
Oh, sure.

Carla steps aside. Carla and Debby move into the living room. It looks emptier than we've seen it in earlier scenes. They sit. Debby is uncomfortable. Carla is encouraging.

CARLA
You want to talk...?

DEBBY
How are you?

CARLA
I'm pretty good.

CONTINUED:

Debby nods and continues to look uncomfortable.

CARLA
Can I get you comething? Coffee?

DEBBY
No thanks. Your husband's at work?

CARLA
I guess. He moved out yesterday.

DEBBY
Oh...

CARLA
We didn't make it.

DEBBY
I'm sorry.

CARLA
It's okay. I'm a different person now.

This is very distressing to Debby. Carla notices and looks uncomfortable.

CARLA
Sure you don't want some --

DEBBY
(jumps in)
You're getting a divorce?

CARLA
(smiles ironically)
I don't think I'm allowed.
(solemn)
But he's not my husband anymore.

A silence follows that is fraught: does she confront this or not? She takes the plunge:

DEBBY
My husband's in love with you --

CARLA
No --

DEBBY
He was willing to die for you.
He must love you.

CONTINUED:

CARLA
No, no. He's a kind man. You know that. You're married to him. You gotta know how kind he is. He likes to help people in trouble...
(leans forward and whispers)
You know what I think? I think he's an angel.

DEBBY
I don't know what to do... He's in trouble...

Debby looks an appeal to Carla...

CARLA
What can I do?

DEBBY
I've tried... I want him to be happy.
(embarrassed)
Even if I lose him.

Carla -- She doesn't know how to react.

CARLA
He saved my soul.

Debby nods. The women sit together quietly, sadly.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MAX'S ROOM - DAY

Max, very swollen and with his face still streaked by white bandages, lies in a private room with a view of New York's skyline.

Carla comes in. Max peers at her. She's carrying a box of chocolate candies. She's normal, back to her pre-cash self.

CARLA
Hi! How ya doing? Here --
(puts chocolates on his tray)
I didn't know what to get. I figured everybody like chocolate. How's your head?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Hurts.

CARLA
I can't tell you how much I...

She's overwhelmed by her gratitude and can't talk for a beat.

CARLA
... You're a wonderful man.

MAX
You look happy.

CARLA
I'm okay. Manny moved out. I told him to.

MAX
Are you all right?

CARLA
I'm okay now. I visited Bubble's grave and it was okay. You know?

MAX
I'm glad.

CARLA
But things can't go back exactly the way they were. Know what I mean?

MAX
Yes.

CARLA
You can go home, Max. It's okay to be alive again.
(smiles)
I'm not a ghost anymore.

MAX
I can't get back.

CARLA
Yes you can.

MAX
I don't want to.

Carla stands up. She looks radiant, but her eyes shimmer.

CONTINUED:

CARLA
I wish I could help, Max.

MAX
(smiles)
We could disappear, Carla.

CARLA
I can't anymore, Max. I'm stuck here. I have to make a new life on earth.
(takes his hand and kisses it)
Say good-bye.

MAX
I don't want to.

CARLA
Say good-bye like it means nothing.

Carla moves off quickly, opens the hospital door, calling back as she leaves:

CARLA
'Bye, Max. See you.

MAX

he can't... he can't.

CARLA (O.S.)
Please, Max.

MAX
(a whisper)
'Bye, Carla...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MAX'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Max's eyes open. He watches the light fade. He is alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

SAME SHOT. Max lies in the same position. The city lights are brilliant now and very far away.

DEBBY (O.S.)
What do you want, Max?

Max turns to look at Debby. She sits in a chair by the wall, far off, but intent on him. Max struggles to answer, seems to fail, and then says, surprising even himself:

MAX
I want you to save me.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERSEY CITY HOSPITAL - DAY

Debby leaves a livery cab near the entrance and heads in.

INT. MAX'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Debby enters. Max isn't there. A NURSE appears with a wheelchair.

NURSE
Where is he?

EXT. HOSPITAL TERRACE - DAY

A terrace reached through French doors from one of the waiting rooms. Max stands at the edge looking out toward New York. His face is covered by thin lines of healed stitches, very light scabs.

The Nurse and Debby appear at the door.

NURSE
Ready to go home, Mr. Klein?

INT. JERSEY CITY HOSPITAL - DAY

The ground floor elevator banks.

DEBBY

as the Nurse turns over to her the job of pushing Max in a wheelchair to the exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max's head bandage is off. Debby pushes him in silence down a long corridor to an exit that ends in sliding doors.

The doors open with a WHOOSH and Brillstein rushes up.

BRILLSTEIN
You're here! Great. It may be premature -- I don't want to jinx it, but I think I'm going to have it all wrapped up tomorrow.

Max doesn't respond. Debby is dulled as well.

DEBBY
Good.

Debby pushes Max forward slowly. Brillstein tags along.

BRILLSTEIN
It's an incredible story. Because of your suicide attempt -- Don't argue, that's how I presented it to them, that you were suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome and they were going to be on the hook for whatever happened to you. Anyway, this morning I hondled with Transcon's lawyers for two hours and we got close, really close to big dollars for you, Mrs. Gordon, and Mrs. Fransisca.

They reach the outer doors and, instead of reacting with pleasure, Debby and Max look past him as she pushes him out the sliding doors.

EXT. JERSEY HOSPITAL

Max gets up from the wheelchair. Brillstein takes his arm as if he needs help. Max shrugs him off. Debby moves down a street toward a waiting livery cab. Max follows and so does Brillstein. Throughout it all Brillstein blabs:

BRILLSTEIN
Anyway, I think we're gonna make out like bandits. An hour after I get the call from the Transcon lawyer, I get one from the insurance carrier.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRILLSTEIN (CONT'D)
I know, I'm terrible to take advantage, but there's been some fuckup in their communication. They both think they're the one designated to negotiate with me. I played dumb, started doing numbers with the insurance guy and his offers are even higher!

Debby has reached the car. She opens the door for Max. Max nods at Brillstein. Brillstein, frantic to make them understand how great things are, shouts:

BRILLSTEIN
I got both preliminaries notarized! They're gonna be stuck!

Brillstein laughs wildly, spinning with happiness.

DEBBY
Congratulations.

She nods to the driver and they go. Brillstein is puzzled.

INT. LIVERY - DAY

Debby looks at Max. He stares ahead. She looks out her window.

DEBBY'S POV

Through the car window she sees a deserted crime scene at a store front. There's a ribbon of sagging yellow police tape. Two men are cleaning up: One sweeps glass with a broom; the second picks up broken goods from the window display.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOD EMPORIUM (UPPER BROADWAY) - DAY

A smallish supermarket on Broadway. The livery car stops in front.

INT. LIVERY - DAY

MAX
What are we doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
I'm going to cook dinner for you.

Debby gets out. Max is puzzled.

INT. FOOD EMPORIUM - DAY

Debby selects delicacies, (caviar, etc.) while Max moves along behind, almost a zombie. Max picks up a box of strawberries.

INT. FOOD EMPORIUM - CHECK OUT - CLOSEUP - CONVEYOR BELT - DAY

as the box of strawberries goes by to be rung up.

Debby's hand intercepts.

DEBBY
That's not ours.

MAX
Yes it is.

DEBBY
It'll kill you.

Max picks up a strawberry from the box and bites it. Debby watches him for a beat, then waves her hand to allow the whole box to go through.

CUT TO:

INT. MAX AND DEBBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Max walks down the hallway to Jonah's room.

INT. JONAH'S ROOM - DAY

Max looks in. It's empty.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Max appears. Debby is already cooking. She works with an air of solemn concentration.

MAX
Where's Jonah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEBBY
At mother's for the night.

Max looks at her -- hard -- for a beat. She doesn't look up.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The large room with a long pine table is open to the living room so we see the river through the windows in b.g. A romantic dinner for two is over. The only illumination are candles on the table.

The strawberries are in a bowl in the center of the table. A dish of them is in front of Max. He is eating one.

Debby gulps a swallow of wine and stands up. She is elegant in a long black dress. She walks away from the table to a cleared area between the two rooms. The black city view of the river and the lit up Jersey shore is almost a painted backdrop as Debby rises, goes to the living room, opens a cabinet and puts on MUSIC.

MAX

the haunting MUSIC washes over him. He smiles at her.

DEBBY

stands in the cleared area between the two rooms and stares at Max. She seems to be willing herself to reach him. She holds his eyes, and slowly, exquisitely...

She dances...

MAX

is touched as he watches her. He understands that she wants to bewitch him, charm him back to her. The flickering light transforms his faint scabs into a kind of handsome scarring, as if he were a pirate.

DEBBY

Twirls once in a pirouette... She fixes Max with a stare at the end of the revolution, seems to float in the look, charming Max.

MAX

fascinated, absorbed. He takes a strawberry.

DEBBY

twirls again faster... and fixes Max with a stare at the end willing herself into him.

MAX

He is charmed. He's finished the strawberry.

He stands up as if to go to Debby and...

Max raises a hand to his throat. He chokes once.

DEBBY

is immediately alarmed.

MAX

surprised, looks at her and chokes again. His face is turning red -- the scabs are purple lines now...

Max falls to the floor, suffocating...

DEBBY
Oh my God --

DEBBY

moves to the phone in the living room in a clumsy rush. She bangs into a coffee table and scatters magazines.

Debby fumbles with the phone and shouts into it.

MAX

Debby is very far away. He can't hear what she says. He looks up at us and the scabs pulse and break open into thin vivid lines of blood, like the stigmata of a martyred saint.

SOUNDTRACK OFF except for MAX. We hear his thought:

MAX (V.O.)
This is it. This is the moment of my death.

DEBBY

She appears, bending over Max.

Debby covers his mouth with hers, giving him the breath of life.

The blood from Max's cuts are impressed on Debby's face as she leans back between each breath so they both wear the red paint of life.

CAMERA DESCENDS FAST ON Max and Debby in a concentric spiral.

FLASHBACK - INT. TRANSCON PLANE - DAY

OVER what follows the MUSIC Debby is PLAYING is heard.

Objects fly in the enclosed space...

Books, bags, shoes, papers...

MAX

We hear Max's voice, spoken in his hed, as an intimate whisper:

MAX (V.O.)
This is it. This is the moment of your death.

Max shuts his eyes, resigned to his death and...

The MUSIC CONTINUES

TRACK FORWARD at CEILING HEIGHT, LOOKING DOWN on passengers:

Young Byron, traveling alone. He stares up AT us in terror.

TRACK MORE until we STOP at --

BUBBLE AND CARLA

Bubble has slid down in his seat. The seatbelt has ridden up around his neck. It's choking him.

CARLA

She fights against the roll of the plane to reach her son. Out her window we see the ground, not sky.

CONTINUED:

WIDEN ANGLE -- with a shudder the cabin tilts back, suddenly righting itself. Carla pulls Bubble free.

SMASH CUT:

STILL IN FLASHBACK - INT. TRANSCON PLANE

Lisa and the flight attendant passing Max and Jeff mouthing words frantically:

The plane steadies -- they are close, too close to the ground, and very near the runway.

Jeff turns to Max and says something in an excited, hopeful manner.

Max answers coolly, almost with hostility.

Jeff blinks. For a moment, we don't know whether he's going to scream or burst into tears.

We see Max glance toward Byron, sitting alone, a few rows up.

Max touches Jeff's arms and speaks gently...

Max unbuckles his belt and says something quick to Jeff and moves up the aisle toward Byron. It's a tough couple of feet.

MAX'S POV

Jeff, pale and worried, looks a silent plea.

MAX

winks at Jeff and gives an okay sign with his hand. The PLANE GROANS and WOBBLES.

Max moves up the aisle, looking from left to right at those who will live and die. The rare one has found inner strength, some pray, some weep.

Max flops into empty seat next to Byron. The boy is pale and drawn.

We hear Max's voice as if spoken in a dream: isolated and significant:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX
Everything's okay.

Max pushes Byron's head forward into his lap. Max leans foward into his own lap, turning his head so he looks into Byron's eyes.

MAX AND BYRON

MAX
Close your eyes.
(as Byron does)
It'll be over soon.

There's a bump from the wheels --

MAX
Everything's wonderful...

A jolt from the right side -- Byron's eyes open in terror --

The nightmare begins...

The right side of the plane goes over. Rows of seats pass Max. There's a flash of bodies and seats collapsing. They crumple like cans of soda --

Max and Byron seem to somersault -- The ceiling panel rips open --

MAX

he shuts his eyes.

END OF FLASHBACK.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Debby's face pulls back from the kiss of life --

Her mouth is smeared with blood and saliva from her resuscitation attempt. She looks panicked:

She's losing Max.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK - INT. TRANSCON PLANE

MUSIC TRACK STILL ON.

MAX (V.O.)
Goodbye...

The plane rolls over and breaks apart.

A sudden stillness as the remains of the cabin come to a rest.

MAX'S POV

SOFT FOCUS: light streaming through something blond.

FOCUS -- It's Byron's hair. He's upside down.

MAX

He's upside down. He is surprised to be alive. Then he's galvanized -- but not frantic, not panicked. Max unbuckles and...

Max falls down to the ceiling, which is now the floor. The drop hurts his knees. Smoke billows from somewhere. The smoke is poisonous.

Max releases Byron's belt and catches him. Max takes Byron's hand. It's impossible to see more than a foot or two, hard to tell where to run, light is so distorted. There's a kind of hazy light to the right.

Max moves that way. We see a squashed body between two seats pressed together.

Max pushes Byron ahead, but holds on to him.

Max halts.

MAX'S POV

There's a newborn baby in an infant seat. The newborn is unhurt, the infant seat suspended in the air by a mass of wires that have been torn out of the ceiling or floor or wall -- it's all a mess, jumbled together.

ON SCENE

Max takes newborn in the infant seat. Byron clings to Max. Smoke and fire are near.

CONTINUED:

MAX
(shouts)
Follow me to the light! Hold on to me! Follow me to the light!

Max moves toward a yellow haze. Abruptly Max stops.

MAX

He looks right at us.

END OF FLASHBACK.

DEBBY

Her face lifts away as Max sucks in air...

We are back in the living room. Max is saved...

DEBBY
Max...?

Their faces are covered with blood, and wet from the mouth to mouth. In the b.g. there are others, paramedics, but between Max and Debby there's nothing but the mixture of each other, both physical and spiritual.

DEBBY
Max...?

MAX

as tears of joy stream down and mix with the lines of blood:

MAX
I'm alive.

They kiss. Max pulls away.

MAX
I'm alive.

And they kiss again, frantically... crying and laughing between kisses as the MUSIC CONTINUES...

FADE OUT.

THE END

THIS SCRIPT WAS PREPARED

BY WARNER BROS. INC.

SCRIPT PROCESSING DEPARTMENT

(818) 954-4632